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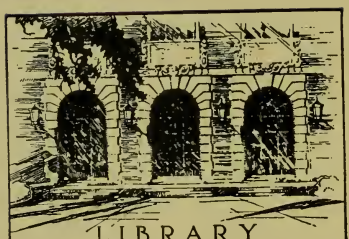

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WOODBURN GRANGE.

WOODBURN GRANGE.

A Story of English Country Life.

BY

WILLIAM HOWITT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CHARLES W. WOOD, 13, TAVISTOCK ST., STRAND.
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WOODBURN GRANGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CLAVERINGS AND HERITAGES.

On the morning after the frolic on the island, as the young friends called it, when the breakfast was over, where the merriment of the affair, and the return of Henry Clavering had been discussed, and the ladies were left to themselves, topics were introduced which belonged only to the initiated, that is, to the womenkind.

"How well Mr. Clavering looks," said Mrs. Woodburn, "and how kind and amiable he is. What a joy it is to George to have him back again, and you, Ann?"

"Oh! I am very glad indeed that he is

come back; poor Sir Emanuel must have been so lonely by himself up in that great house."

"True," said Mrs. Woodburn. "But you, Ann? Has he altered his opinions at all?"

Ann shook her head, the tears started to her eyes, and she said, "No, dear mother, he is just the same; it is very sad."

"It is sad," said Mrs. Woodburn; "but let us wait God's time, my dear child; I will still hope that so excellent a young man, with such sense and such a heart, must come right at last."

Ann again shook her head, and said, sorrowfully, "I don't know; pray God it may be so," and went on with her sewing.

As a conversation between Mr. Clavering and Miss Woodburn happened to come to my ear, as it does so often come, by means of the little bird which carries so many arcana to authorly ears, I may throw a little light on the mysterious words of Mrs. Woodburn and her daughter. For a long time there had

been a strong and tender attachment betwixt Henry Clavering and Ann Woodburn. Mr. Clavering, George's old schoolfellow, and almost constant companion since, had been most intimate at Woodburn Grange. The whole family loved and admired him, for his sound sense, high moral feeling, and unassuming kindly disposition. The attachment betwixt Ann and him had grown up almost insensibly. He made a direct offer to Ann, and this was warmly seconded by every one of her family. Independently of the splendid fortune and title which Mr. Clavering would inherit, and the fortunate nearness of his abode, no woman could expect to find in a husband a more agreeable person, a more rich possessor of moral and intellectual endowments and qualities. What, then, stood in the way? There was an obstacle, to Ann's religious and conscientious nature, which in her opinion was insurmountable. Mr. Clavering had no faith in Christianity: he had but a

doubtful one in the existence of man after death.

Sir Emanuel Clavering, as we have seen, was accredited in the mind of the common people round with the practice of the black art. For that, of course, there was no foundation; but as there cannot well be smoke where there is no fire, there was a certain foundation for this notion. Sir Emanuel, in the ardent pursuit of astronomical science, had acquired the most profound idea of the wondrous construction and illimitable extent of the universe. That it was produced and upheld in such beautiful order by some great invisible power co-extensive with itself, he could not doubt; but he felt an invincible difficulty in imagining that this could be any living being. He believed it rather to be an intelligent principle or force producing all things—the soul, as it were, of all visible creation. In a word, he was what we understand by a Pantheist. If there were a God,

he conceived it must be a sentient principle rather than a concentrated mind, inhabiting some localised vehicle perceptible even to spiritual beings, if there were such. It was to him something illimitable, unapproachable, incomprehensible : the infinite, impossible to be conceived of, or perceived by the finite. For these reasons, he disbelieved the whole narrative of God taking a human form and coming down and dying for mankind.

Mrs. Heritage, deeply grieved at such notions in a man otherwise excellent and so agreeable, had felt herself drawn to meet him, and reason with him on this head. Admitting that the infinite must be incomprehensible to the finite, she asked him if he could understand his own existence ? Yet he did exist, and so did God. Had no such scheme as this earth, and of human beings living in so complicated a machine of flesh, blood, nerves, and their sensations, supported by vegetables converted by digestive process into this flesh

and blood ; of the growth of all animals, and of man himself ; of all vegetables, of the mightiest trees, with all their varied and delicious fruits and essences—not been exhibited to intellectual beings capable of observing it, she urged that such beings could by no possibility have conceived the idea of so marvellous a creation.

Sir Emanuel admitted the force of her arguments, and thanked her most warmly for presenting them to his mind, but he could by no means bring himself to believe, amidst the myriads of worlds which the telescope revealed to the eye—far as its powers could open up the inconceivable distances of the heavens—that God could condescend to come down to this one little planet, and take upon himself the weaknesses and inconveniences of humanity, and be insulted and killed by his own creatures. It revolted, he said, the totality of his reason.

Mrs. Heritage reminded him that he had

just admitted that everything around him was beyond the grasp of reason, and he ought to content himself with the unquestionable facts of a thoroughly authenticated history.

Sir Emanuel smiled, and said that he must think of that part of the subject, and concluded the conversation by thanking Mrs. Heritage, and asking her to go and look at some American deer that he had just received from the United States. Mrs. Heritage often afterwards renewed the conversation with Sir Emanuel, and he had always received her remarks in the kindest and most courteous manner, but remained apparently as fixed in his old views as ever. In these views Henry Clavering, his only son, had grown up. They had never been expressly taught him by his father, but he had listened to conversations on these topics so often, and had such respect for the talents and honourable nature of his father, whilst his mother had been lost to him when very young, that these ideas were

to him as part of his mental constitution.

It was this knowledge that had been Ann Woodburn's stumbling-block and most painful trial. Loving Mr. Clavering with all the strength of her deeply-feeling nature, she could not bring herself to contemplate an alliance with a man who was not a Christian, whatever else he might be. Oh, many a long and deep struggle it had occasioned her; many a restless and sleepless night; many a sorrowful, miserable day. Sometimes her agony rose to such desperation that she had locked herself in her bed-room and flung herself on the floor, and rolled there in a frenzy of grief. All her eloquence had been used to induce Henry Clavering to read works of our great divines on the subject; all the arguments with which they had furnished her she had zealously urged on him; but without any effect but that of making him as wretched as herself. He told her that most

gladly would he be convinced, most earnestly he wished that he could think as she did; but he could not, and would not conceal from her the truth. After long endeavours and waitings on the part of Ann, and a state of mind most wearing to Mr. Clavering himself, Ann had told him that she felt that she never could consent to a union whilst their opinions on so vital a point remained as they were, and though to her it was like dividing soul and body, she would not remain a tie upon him; she left him free as the winds to choose some more fortunate and, as he might think, more reasonable woman.

To this proposal Henry Clavering would not listen. "No," said he, "my dearest Ann, I cannot change my heart and soul at pleasure. With you or with no one must I unite my life. I feel the greatness of your self-sacrifice, but it is not in your power to set me free. I am what I am, and must be. My love for you is rooted into the deepest

region of my heart—neither you nor I can tear it out at will. I will wait for you as long as you like—and you or I may change."

Sir Emanuel Clavering had seconded the proposal of his son with the most zealous advocacy. He said he rejoiced at the idea of seeing Cotmanhaye Manor lit up and warmed and graced by such a mistress. He told Ann that she must not make herself and Henry wretched by silly scruples. They were both as good as they could be, and they might well leave all the rest to the winding-up of time. But then Sir Emanuel let slip a word which would have spoiled all had there been any chance of Ann's acquiescence.

"Come," said he, "dismiss any more girlish fancies; let me see you my dear daughter-in-law, and at Cotmanhaye we will make you as pretty a little infidel as can be wished."

"God forbid!" said Ann, shuddering; and these words sunk deep into her soul. She

travelled on in thought to the time when she might be the mother of precious children, and the idea of their growing up in such an atmosphere of infidelity made her resolve irrevocable. In vain had Henry Clavering assured her that in the event of a family, she should indoctrinate the children as she pleased. Not a word from him, and he thought he might answer for his father, should ever be let fall to mar her maternal counsels.

"But," said Ann, "you would not even say one word which should accord with my teachings, and what a predicament for the quick sagacity of childhood!"

Such was the state of things which had induced Henry Clavering to go abroad, and had made him a wanderer through far countries for two years. It was this which had made Ann Woodburn, however outwardly calm and occasionally smiling, inwardly sad and anxious, and had deepened with a pro-

portionate force her religious feelings. As the party of young people walked home in the evening of yesterday through the woods, Mr. Clavering had gradually fallen behind with Ann, and, taking her hand affectionately, had said, with a tone full of feeling :—

"What news, my dear Ann? Have your scruples vanished? May we hope for better days?"

"No, dear Henry," replied Ann, sorrowfully. "My scruples, as you call them, can never leave me; and I fear from your question that your views have undergone no change."

"I must confess," said Mr. Clavering, "that they have not."

"Then," said Ann, after a long silence, "let us not renew that subject. Let us leave it to God. But I say again, Henry, why should you waste your existence in useless regrets and unrequited affections for such a simple country maiden as me, when a bril-

liant world is open to you, and so many fitter and livelier companions within the scope of your choice? I do not say, forget me—let us be friends; but, be free from all thought of me."

Henry Clavering held affectionately her hand, and they walked on in silence; but he felt that hand quiver, and saw that she trembled violently.

"Well, let us leave this topic," he said, "at least for the present. I shall not make you miserable. We will still look onward, and hope."

Ann Woodburn gave him a look of most loving thankfulness, wiped her tears from her face, and they went on, hand in hand, in silence till they came up with their companions. Let us now return to the conversation of the mother and daughters at the Grange.

"I think," said Letty, looking rather knowingly, "that 'the course of true love' really seldom does run smooth."

"Yours, Letty, I think, runs smooth enough," said Ann, brightening up. "Really, it is not for you to say that, with Mr. Thorsby's declaration and your worthy parents' consent given but yesterday."

"Oh!" said Letty, blushing and looking very happy, "I was not thinking of myself, but of Millicent Heritage."

"Of Millicent Heritage!" exclaimed her mother and sister; "why, what of her?"

"I am sure," continued Ann, "Dr. Leroy is over head and ears in love with her. Never did I see a young man's eyes always resting with such affectionate expression on any one as his do on Miss Heritage; and really she seems very fond of him; and a most accomplished and amiable man he is."

"True, all true," said Letty, taking a folded paper from her pocket. "I told you I would read you a bit of Miss Heritage's poetry; and when you have heard it—well, then you can judge. This poem was given to

Miss Drury by Millicent, and she has allowed me to copy it."

"Oh, let us have it!" said both the ladies, "we never heard a line of Quaker poetry—not even that Mr. Moon's you mentioned."

"Moon James," said Letty; "but now—" she began—

COME TO ME.

Come to me, loved one, from thy heaven descending,
Come to me softly, with the falling dews;
Come when the shadows and the lights are blending,
And the heart fondly all its past renews.
Come to me, loved one,
As I sit and muse.

Come to me in the hushed, dark midnight hour,
Fall with thy spirit gladness on my heart,
Let me embrace thee in the deathless power
Of that which once cemented cannot part.
Come to me, loved one,—
Spirit though thou art.

Come to me, loved one, when the breeze is sighing,
And the far sky shines with a lonely light;
Where loving lips to loving words replying,
Make even this cloudy world divinely light.
Come to me, loved one,
Let our souls unite!

For I would live, and love, and ever be
A part of that, and those, the sacred few,
With whom my heart has grown in such degree
Of deep endearment as the heavens renew.
Come to me, loved one,
Say—the dead are true.

Come, when the days are dark, the storms are raving,
When friends are passing, and the heart is low,
Come, when the soul is sick, and inly craving
For what it hopes and dreams and fain would know.
Come to me, loved one,
In thy star-like glow.

Come in God's freedom of the souls set free;
No startling touch, no vision dread be mine—
Enfold me in thy presence—let me be
Soul of thy soul in all its life divine.
Come to me, loved one,
Whisper—thine, still thine!

"Is that Miss Heritage's?" asked Mrs. Woodburn. "Is it really? I did not think so much was in her. It is rather lugubrious; but for so young a girl, there is stuff in it."

"But you know, father says these Quakers are extraordinary people," said Letty. "You don't know all at once what is in them."

"It is very good," said Ann. "I should like a copy of it. It is much better, I undertake to say, than that Mr. Moon's."

"Moon James," reiterated Letty, "but, as mother says, a little lugubrious, and reminds me of that 'sentimental' Miss Bailey, who says she does so love melancholy subjects."

"And who," asked Mrs. Woodburn, "can this apostrophised beloved one be? A mere girl's fancy, I expect."

"No," said Letty; "Miss Drury says it was some young fellow of a cousin who got drowned in the Trent when he was about eighteen, bathing. I wonder what Dr. Leroy would say to this poem?"

"He would not mind," said Mrs. Woodburn. "Miss Heritage is not likely to pine in reality after a youth drowned years ago, with such a good-looking and clever lover as Dr. Frank Leroy. Perhaps it was a good thing the lad did get drowned.

These Friends make too many cousin-marriages."

"Dear mother!" exclaimed both the daughters, "would you drown off the young Friends who were in danger of marrying cousins?"

"No, no," replied Mrs. Woodburn, laughing, "not so bad as that; I would only send such mischievous young fellows to Botany Bay."

With a burst of good-natured merriment at Mrs. Woodburn's proposal for curing Quaker cousin-marriages, the conversation ended, Mrs. Woodburn going away to her household duties, and Letty to copy her poem.

We have now given a pretty full picture of the life at Woodburn Grange, and a few glimpses into Friend life, as it was then. The reader, no doubt, thinks with us, that it is about time that our story marched at something more than a goose-step, with

which I fully accord, and shall set forward with it accordingly after one more observation. Many readers, accustomed only to the measured manners betwixt masters and mistresses and domestic servants of to-day, and especially in towns, will probably think the free and often very personal speech of Betty Trapps out of nature, or, at least, out of place. Those who lived then in the country, perhaps some living there now, will recollect female servants who were quite as free-spoken and as brusquely-unflattering as Betty Trapps, and who, nevertheless, lived their twenty and thirty years in a family. Their industry, fidelity, and attachment to the family which they served, made a grand set-off against their unceremonious freedom. Such servants were not only tolerated but greatly valued, and it would have been a severe trial to part with them. A sort of relationship, approaching to kinship, seemed to grow up with such long and free service, and many of the old

servants came to be called by the name of the family they lived in. Very probably Betty Trapps was often called in the village and neighbourhood, Betty at Woodburns', and, at length, Betty Woodburn. One such Betty I knew, who used to hunt us children up, wash us, and pack us off to the village school. I should never forget her, were it only for rubbing my nose so hardly and crumplingly with the napkin after washing me. But I remember her still more for many a kind office, many a token of affection, many an absorbing story as we sate round the great blazing wood fire in the house-place of a winter's evening, and Betty travelled back amongst the days and acquaintance of her youth, and found things that were to her still "very cutting," and which we yet called for again and again.

CHAPTER II.

A WILD GALLOP.

Whilst these things were transpiring, and a pleasant intercourse of friendship was progressing in and about Woodburn, things and feelings of a very different character were laying the foundations of future complications in the same, as yet, happy neighbourhood.

Mr. Degge had taken and furnished a cottage in Hillmartin, very near his own house, for his mother. The yet hale and cheerful woman of fifty, was much fonder of a house more resembling in size and furnishing her former humble habitation by the Castleborough meadows, than the large house of her son called Hillmartin Hall. She could not here work and get up linen, but she

could spin and look after a little garden. She must have some employment: and Simon Degge knew that his mother would feel much more happy in a house of her own than in a great house, even though her son and daughter-in-law showed her every honour and all affection, She could come in and out as she pleased, and yet have a house to return to where she was mistress, and felt that everything was her own. She had one little maid-servant, and her cottage was as cheerful and pleasant as plenty and a love of neatness and order could make it. She had her little garden, and cultivated flowers, especially the old English flowers, pinks, double-daisies, daffodils, wall-flowers, polyanthuses, and the like. The roses and honeysuckles that covered her garden porch and peeped in at her windows, saw the balm-of-Gilead and egg plants and geraniums looking out at them and seeming to say, "we are all happy."

Old Mrs. Degge, if old she could be called, had her cat and her great green-baize covered bible, and she could do with such company much better than some people can with whole crowds. Mrs. Degge—we shall distinguish her daughter-in-law as Mrs. Simon Degge—had beyond these things a source of satisfaction which, next to the happiness and prosperity of her son and his family, was the grand satisfaction of her life. Mrs. Degge was a Methodist, and was a most notable acquisition to the society at Hillmartin. There were a considerable number of Methodists in the village, but chiefly amongst the poorer class. There was no appointed preacher at the chapel, but local preachers, often working men at Castleborough, officiated there. Sometimes there came a greater gun—a round-preacher, as he was called—one appointed by Conference to preach at different places within a certain round, or district. Besides these, there were

occasional amateur preachers—gentlemen, who felt it a duty to assist in preaching the gospel.

To these different labourers in the great field, there had wanted a comfortable hostel, as it were, or house where they could receive such rest and refreshment as the outer man requires, however strong and unwearied the inner man might be. Exactly such a pleasant, home-like domicile could Mrs. Degge now offer them. There the preachers could go direct, with the feeling of a welcome as sincere as it was acceptable. The poor servant of the gospel who had to foot it from the town, up the long hill, often in sweltering hot weather, often amid the snow and storms of winter, there found always a cheerful hearth, a ready cushioned arm-chair, a smiling, pious face, and a heart always ready to give the sure tokens of welcome and comfort. There they could dine and rest betwixt the morning and evening services: there they could take tea, and enjoy the

company of one or other of the esteemed brethren who dropped in. There was a chamber, clean, snug, and quiet, if there were need of stopping the night. The richer brother who came on horseback knew that his horse was as welcome and would be ministered to as cordially in the stable of Mr. Degge, as he himself would be at his mother's. Mr. Degge had assured them himself of this, and often stepped in and had a friendly chat with these apostles of the people. He told his mother that she was not to spare any expense in making her house a resort most agreeable to her friends; and Mrs. Degge, knowing that this was as genuinely said as she herself could say it, made her house the pleasant resort of the prophets of her community as much as the Shunamite woman of old did her little room on the wall to Elisha.

A class met at Mrs. Degge's house; and at any cottage in the village where any

members of the society lived, Mrs. Degge was a most welcome visitor, always ready to carry help and comfort wherever there was need, or sickness, or want of counsel. Mr. Degge not only enabled her to do all that "she found in her heart to do," but he paid off an old debt on the chapel, for at that time of day, few country chapels of the Wesleyans were without such a debt, whatever they may now be; and he frequently contributed liberally, as well as enabling his mother to contribute liberally, to the subscriptions ever and anon called for.

But these favours to the religious friends of his mother were fresh aggravations of his offences against the fixed prejudices of the neighbouring squirearchy. Sir Roger Rockville had driven the Methodists with a high hand out of his village and beyond his domains, and here was this odious money-bag of Castleborough fostering them to the utmost of his and his old washer-woman mothers'

ability in Hillmartin almost under his nose. Every neighbouring squire sympathised with Sir Roger, and afresh denounced Simon Degge as a nuisance.

Of this feeling he had very soon a proof. In the churchyard at Hillmartin was a large brick vault, which had belonged to the family who had been years ago the owners of the house and land now purchased by Simon Degge. As this family had long been extinct, and there was ample space unoccupied in the vault, Mr. Degge proferred to purchase this vault of the vicar. This gentleman did not reside at Hillmartin but at Gotham, and preached once a week, that is, on the Sunday afternoons, at Hillmartin. Mr. Degge made his proposal for the vault, intending to arrange the leaden coffins of the old family at one end, and build a wall across in front of them, so as to leave his portion a complete vault of itself. The clergyman appeared quite willing, and said he would consider

what would be a fair price. But time went on, and Mr. Degge received no answer. He applied again and again, but the vicar had not come to a decision. At length he said, on being pressed, that he was very agreeable to make over the vault to Mr. Degge, but that he found there was a little difficulty in the matter. This difficulty he did not explain, and the delay went on again for a long time. When pressed as to where this difficulty lay, he said it lay with the bishop.

Mr. Degge at once wrote to the bishop, begging for an explanation of the difficulty, and received a note from the bishop saying that he was himself quite favourable to his desire, but that there lay a little difficulty elsewhere. Mr. Degge pressed to know where, and at length learned from the bishop that it lay with the vicar. This opened his eyes; and he ceased any further application, saying he was very foolish for entering into negotiation for a vault while mother earth

was ready in a most friendly manner to receive the remains of himself or of any one belonging to him. His friend, Thomas Clavering, however, on hearing of this piece of poor equivocation, told him he might build a vault, as large as he liked, in the churchyard at Cotmanhaye any day.

Another circumstance greatly embittered the minds of the squires against Mr. Degge. The difficulty which he found in procuring the conviction of a person for any offence against his property, or of defending any of his work-people or the villagers against vexatious warrants issued by one or other of these gentlemen on the suggestions of their bailiffs or keepers, induced him to desire to be made a magistrate of the county as well as the town, which he was. Sir Emanuel Clavering was willing at all times to give him his support, but then he was only one opposed to half a-dozen, or, if they chose to carry the matter to the sessions, many more. Sir

Emanuel strongly recommended this step, as although it would leave him in a very slender minority, there were cases which they could deal with on their united warrants, and their influence would be felt altogether more effectual. This object was accomplished through the intervention of Lord Netherland, the Recorder of Castleborough, but to the infinite disgust of the squirearchy, of the stamp described, all round. The epithets of "pauper" and "upstart" were heard once more in every cadence of indignation. Here was this tradesman, this unabashed, irrepressible plebeian, now not only planting himself down in the very midst of them, but usurping their honourable magisterial functions, and mounting the very bench hallowed by their time-honoured dulnesses. Sir Roger Rockville was in a condition of the most deplorable effervescence.

Scarcely had this odious apparition started up amongst them, and desecrated the arena

of their justiciary operations, when a circumstance occurred which startled them with a proof of the inconveniences which they had to apprehend.

A labourer and his son, a boy about ten years of age, was returning from the fields towards Hillmartin village, and were following the footpath through a copse, when the lad saw a thrush's nest on one of the lowest boughs of a spruce-fir, temptingly nestled close to the stem, not more than a yard from the ground. Away he ran towards it, his father stopping for him on the path. Arrived near the tree, the lad as he ran struck his foot against something and fell, but jumping up, said,

"Oh father, here is a great chain!"

He was stooping to lift it up, when the father cried out,

"Let it alone! let it alone! it is a man-trap!"

The boy stood terrified at the dreaded

name of a man-trap. The father advanced carefully, poking the ground, which was covered with dead leaves, with a long pole which he picked up. When he came to the spot where the boy stood, he saw part of a strong chain laid bare, and lifting it up, discovered close to his feet a stout iron pin, which was driven into the ground and thus confined the chain. Telling the boy not to move, he gradually lifted the chain till he felt it again fast.

"There," he said, "is the trap."

He looked round, and discovering a large stone, he fetched it, and discharged it into the place where he supposed the centre of the trap to be. At once with a horrid snap and clang, the jaws of the huge trap sprung out of the concealing leaves and clashed together with a direful shock. Father and son stood rooted fast with terror. There was revealed the great iron engine in a half circle of at least half a yard high, with

its hideous iron teeth closed and grinning terribly.

"There!" said the father—"take care, Tom, how you goon a bird-nesting into woods. If this had caught you, it would have snapped you in the very middle of your body, and these devil's teeth would have a'most met in your flesh. Nobody but the wretch of a keeper as set it could have got you out, and if you had bin by yersen you mun ha' died afore anybody had fun ye."

The man immediately, on reaching the village, asked permission to see Mr. Degge, who heard the account with great indignation, and taking another strong man with him, went to the place to see this truly "infernal machine." He found it within five yards of the footpath through the copse, and expressing his astonishment and abhorrence of an act then become as illegal as it was monstrous, he ordered the men to take it

and carry it to the village. There they deposited it by the public stocks, and chained it, and made it fast by a padlock to it,—fitting companions. The exhibition, and the place in which this horrid engine was found, created a most indignant sensation against Sir Roger Rockville and his keeper. Such were the diabolical machines that used to be set in our game preserves half a century ago or more, almost as commonly as the lesser trap is yet set for lesser animals. Such is the wonderful effect of custom and of selfish interests, that these dire engines of a demoniac cruelty could be planted here and there in English woods, and which might catch and hold in their hideous fangs human creatures, and keep them in inexpressible tortures for perhaps twelve hours or more ; whilst all the time the gentlemen and the ladies on those estates were sleeping comfortably in their beds. Such was the force of these man-traps, that they required a man with an iron

winch to open them by a mechanism attached for the purpose.

These barbarous machines had now been made illegal by act of parliament, yet Sir Roger and others continued to use them, as I know, for I myself had long after this period a narrow escape, when botanizing, of being caught in one in the woods of Strelley, near Nottingham ; and that within a few yards of a foot-road !

There was a great running from all parts of the village to see this monument of the tender mercies of Sir Roger Rockville, and many were the inverted blessings showered on his head. Very soon, however, the keeper came in hot haste to reclaim his trap, and Mr. Degge immediately apprehended him by warrant, and committed him to the house of correction and hard labour for six months.

The sensation with which the news of this event was received by Sir Roger, and amongst his confreres of the woods and the bench, it

would be impossible to describe. The audacity of Simon Degge had reached a pitch which surpassed all their bounds of conception. Why, he was daring to treat them as they had treated the humble villagers for centuries. At first there was a great talk of Mr. Degge having committed a robbery, of having carried off Sir Roger's property from his own ground. But soon his cautious clerk advised him that Mr. Degge, as a magistrate, could seize an unlawful instrument anywhere. The man-trap was accordingly secured to the public stocks by strong rivets, and there it remained for many years. Whilst the event was fresh, many gentlemen and ladies drove or rode to Hillmartin to have a look at this relic of ancient savagery. On the Sunday following, hundreds of the working people, men, women, and children, flocked thither to see it, and as they returned by Rockville Hall gave very hearty groans for Sir Roger.

There was a mighty consulting amongst

this little group of the worst kind of country squires; and it was resolved to sign unanimously, of course, short of Mr. Degge and Sir Emanuel Clavering, an order for the release of the keeper—but the cautious clerk of the bench again advised against this. He represented that the man was legally committed for a legal offence, and such was the spirit of Mr. Degge, who was also now Mayor of Castleborough, that he would compel them by mandamus to show cause for such release, and this would make the affair still more widely commented upon. As it was, the liberal newspapers far and wide had published the account, and made most cutting criticisms upon it. They even called for the seizure of Sir Roger by warrant, and his committal to the treadmill. Nothing for a long time had excited such a paroxysm of public indignation.

The breach betwixt the Rockville, Bullockshed and Tenterhook class and that of Woodburn, Hillmartin and Cotmanhaye was enor-

mously widened. Simon Degge, Mayor of Castleborough, and county magistrate of Hillmartin, was regarded as a pestilent demagogue of the first rank : and all those who fraternized with him, as the Claverings, Woodburns, Heritages, and indeed many of the more enlightened county families, and the whole of the Castleborough population, were looked on as a crooked generation, hostile to all the ancient institutions of the country. In woods and kennels, and in several country halls, Simon Degge and his friends were cursed before all the gods of the game-laws ; in town and village everywhere Simon Degge was the hero of the people. All looked to him as their friend and powerful protector. "One of ourselves," they said, "he does not desert us, he remains one of ourselves." Whoever saw him, saw a man as little like a restless mischievous demagogue as it was possible to conceive. For a great part of the day he was in town, partly attending to his own

mercantile affairs, partly to the affairs of his office. When he got to Hillmartin, he might be seen riding quietly over his farm, or at home happy and gay as possible amidst three or four children, now enlivening his house: or he was taking a quiet drive with his mother and wife, as if he had no care on him, and no desire in him to do battle with any one. Of the feeling abroad amongst the Nimrod class and their followers, a circumstance soon occurred to make him more deeply sensible.

On a fine summer evening, George and Letty Woodburn had ridden to Hillmartin, and Simon Degge had mounted his horse and accompanied them a few miles further on the road beyond Gotham. Letty was mounted on a handsome light bay mare, which had been newly purchased for her. She was delighted with it, and praised the easy paces of the creature.

"She is very handsome," said Simon Degge,

"but there is occasionally a rather vicious look in her eye that I don't like. I would advise you to ride her with a martingale, and a curb-bit rather than with that snaffle."

"Do you think so?" said Letty, "she is very fresh, certainly, but I think quite gentle and amiable," and she patted her on the neck.

"She does sometimes cast side-glances with her eyes," said George, "that are a little suspicious, and she is rather hard-mouthed. I shall adopt your advice, Mr. Degge, as safest."

At this moment Letty found it rather hard work to hold her in. She had a short, dancing, impatient action, and seemed to long to be off at a smart rate. All at once there was a blow on the high hawthorn hedge on the left hand of the road, and off went the mare. She took the bit between her teeth, stretched out her neck as straight as a dart, laid back her ears, and away! George and Mr. Degge endeavoured to spring on before her and seize her by the bridle-rein, but this

only set her off more impetuously than before. In vain Letty pulled her in with all her power, and endeavoured to pluck, by a sudden jerk, the bit out of her teeth. She held it as fast as if in a vice, and went off, spite of her efforts, at a furious rate. George and Mr. Degge were in the utmost alarm. Any attempt to pursue her only made the frantic animal dash on more madly. One thing appeared in Letty's favour ; there was a long, ascending, though not very steep hill, and her friends trusted that the mare would wind herself before she got to the top, and so allow herself to be pulled in. George, without daring to gallop after her at full speed, yet kept on at a smart pace, taking the grassy borders of the road, so as not to let the flying animal hear him more than he could help. Mr. Degge, who stopped a moment to look over a gate into the field, to see whence the alarm had come, was now galloping rapidly after. Letty kept her seat like a capital horsewoman

as she was ; and George felt confident that unless something caused the mare to start aside or to fall, she would go on safely home with her. But there might be people coming who might attempt to stop the mare, and cause her to swerve suddenly aside, or she might dash madly against one of the two turnpike gates and kill both herself and rider. The speed at which she flew on was frightful. God's providence could alone prevent some fatal disaster. In one place there was a broken spot in the middle of the road, over which she sprang with a tremendous leap, but Letty sate securely, and away ! away ! they went like the wind : the two gentlemen in breathless terror following as near as they dare approach.

Anon, the flying maniac steed came to a steep and considerable descent. "If Letty keeps her seat there," said or rather thought George, "it will all be well." He gazed with fixed eyes and suspended breath as he himself

sped along, expecting to see his sister lose in that rapid, shaking descent, her equilibrium, and perhaps fly over the horse's head, but no,—unmoved, undaunted, as it would appear by her steady figure and attitude, on she flew, a cloud of dust coming driving thickly behind her.

Again she dashed up another ascent, and now was on a long level road—there ! one of of the toll-bars, but standing wide open. Through dashed the horse and rider. Out rushed a woman—threw her arms aloft over her head, and stood, as the two gentlemen rushed past, like a picture of ghastly and petrified terror. On, away ! away ! the next toll-bar, but this time the gate shut. George was all horror, expecting, in chill desperation, a terrible tragedy. On went the mare, without stop or stay, dashed against the gate, which flew aside, and on they went, more frightfully than ever. "God send," said George in his soul, "that no waggon may

be coming this way—the furious beast would dash right upon it, and——"

But now the race was nearly at an end. Four miles were they distant when the mare started off, and now they were flying down the sandy road under the cliff towards Woodburn Grange. As their horses made little noise in the deep sand of the road, George and Mr. Degge spurred on, and saw, as they turned the bend of the road, the mare dash right up to the gates of the stable-yard, and stop in an instant. George expected to see Letty pitched right over the yard gates, which were not higher than the horse's shoulder. She was thrown only on its neck, and there lay a moment as if stunned. By the time George rode up, she had recovered herself, and had sprung to the ground, where she stood, pale, still, and as in a dream. George sprung from his horse, and catching her in his arms, said, "Thank God that all is well."

Letty made no answer, but broke into loud hysterical laughter, and then fainted. Mr. and Mrs. Woodburn and the servants had all rushed out as they saw the mare coming at mad speed, covered with foam and dust, and Letty riding as if she had no fear, for she was silent, and made no gesture of alarm. It was the courage of desperation ; one moment's loss of self-control, and her destruction would have been instant. Such had been the speed of that wild ride, that it had occupied but a few minutes. George carried Letty in amid frantic exclamations from the women that she was dead, was killed. But he told them she was not hurt, and bade them be quiet. He laid her on the sofa, and amid the bustle and the terror around her, there she lay as in a trance, pale, fair, and beautiful as a spirit.

In awhile she revived, and said, smilingly, that by God's blessing, she was quite well, but as she attempted to rise, she exclaimed,

"Oh! my head! my head! how dizzy! all is swimming—going round!" and she lay down again. This dizziness returned at any attempt to lift her head. Mr. Degge had already ridden off for Dr. Leroy, and soon came galloping back with him. He had brought such remedies as suggested themselves to him, and proceeded to bathe her temples and forehead with ether, which Letty found delightfully cool. He gave her some anodyne or other, and requested her to lie as quiet and as tranquilly in mind as possible. He said that the violent strain on the nervous system, and excitement of the brain, would show their effects for some time; and so it proved. The dizziness continued still on any motion, and during the night she awoke repeatedly in great alarm, and with piercing cries, dreaming she was again riding that fearful race, though during it she had shown nothing but the most calm courage. For some weeks she continued to feel the effects

of the great terror and effort through which she had gone. In all the rushing fury of the flight, she said she had only prayed for a clear course, and that the horse might keep its footing.

The praises of her courageous bearing, and the indignation of every one at the dastardly fellow who had occasioned the frightful occurrence, were pretty equal. Mr. Degge, who had ridden to the place immediately after and traced out the man, said he was a keeper of Mr. Sheepshanks, and that he had no doubt the thing was purposely done; though the fellow said he was only trying to start a rabbit, that had gone into the hedge there. It was not long, however, before a Hillmartin labourer, who had met the fellow in a public-house, heard him say, that he thought it had been Mrs. Degge, and he had rather it had been. As for that Miss Woodburn, however, he was glad she came to no harm, for there was no woman in that county or the next

that could stick in a saddle like her. Mr. Degge and every member of the Woodburn, and of hundreds of other families except Letty herself, longed to be able to fix the charge of purposed mischief on him, but it could not be done.

By the time that Letty was all right again, George had, by repeated trials with a curb bridle and martingale, ascertained that the mare was perfectly manageable. It was clear that so long as she was prevented getting the full stretch of her neck and head, she would make no attempt at running away with her rider. George rode her daily, and tried her in all ways, and pronounced her safe as a rocking-horse, or a rocking-chair. Letty ere long mounted her again, though amid much nervous terror of all the women at the Grange, and found her most obedient to the hand, and became much attached to her. The incidents of this chapter had, however, shown that the feeling of antagonism in the

Rockville party to our friends of Hill-martin, Woodburn, and one or two other houses, had intensified itself to a dangerous degree.

CHAPTER III.

AN ADVENT AND AN EXIT.

THE visit of Elizabeth Drury at Woodburn Grange was a short time of mutual endearment—one in which true souls and genial natures recognise and draw near to each other. It would be difficult to say which of the family came to love her most, or which of them she came to love most; yet, if there was a deeper, more sympathetic feeling, it was betwixt their guest and George and Ann. George Woodburn looked on Elizabeth Drury as the perfect ideal of womanhood. Her graceful and cheerful form, her bright and enjoying nature, her clear intelligence and sunny spirits, were his increasing admiration. Betwixt Ann and Miss Drury close and confi-

dential conversations revealed the kinship of their tastes, and their deep aspirations after the same intellectual and sacred objects. They made discoveries of thought and feeling which created in them a sisterhood. But scarcely less did Mr. and Mrs. Woodburn and Letty affectionately estimate their guest, or she them—the warm-heartedness of Mrs. Woodburn, the sterling character of Mr. Woodburn, the joyous impulsiveness of Letty.

Miss Drury pressed the two young ladies to pay her a visit of some weeks in Yorkshire; and as soon as the corn-harvest was got in they took their flight thither. Their reception was as glowingly kind as it was possible to be. Elizabeth Drury and her father met them at the next town, and drove them to Garnside Farm, their home, in one of the beautiful dales for which that part of Yorkshire is famous. The house was old but spacious, handsomely furnished, and surrounded by a large garden. A great extent

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of barns and out-buildings near it, presented almost the aspect of a village. A wide prospect along a broad valley, through which ran a rapid and clear stream, and, over the valley, of dark woods bounded by long azure hills or fells, was a constant charm for the eye from the windows. Mr. Trant Drury was a tall, gentlemanly, rather sparely-built man of middle age, always clad in a blue lapelled coat with gilt buttons, a pale yellow kerseymere striped waistcoat, cord small-clothes, and handsome top-boots. He was energetic and somewhat impetuous in his manner, whilst Mrs. Drury, a tall, slight woman, had something timid and over-gentle in hers. Miss Drury was the same natural and loveable person as they had seen her on her visit. She seemed to form a free and unconstrained medium betwixt father and mother, where otherwise the mother might have sunk into a mere automaton, obeying with a certain dread the dominant temperament of her husband.

Mr. Drury was evidently a man full of the science and business of his life. His bookcase displayed all the chief works on agriculture and bucolics, from Virgil and Columella down to Tull, Kames, Arthur Young, Sinclair, and the rest of the great georgic writers. His sheds and waggon yards displayed all the varieties of modern machines for facilitating the operations of rural culture. His barns and cattle-houses, his stables, with their drainage and ventilations, his threshing and winnowing, and chaff and turnip-cutting, his oat and furze-bruising engines, his riding and team horses, herds of Holderness cattle, and his flocks of mixed Cheviot and Merino sheep, were all objects of a pride and interest that knew no bounds. The Misses Woodburn, as the daughters of a gentleman farmer, must turn out with him and visit them all. He very soon had them on foot all over his farm, and pointed out his corn and grass lands, the evident effects of his drainings on his

higher lands and sluicings on his meadows, his already-springing wheat, his exquisitely neat ploughing, his turnips and beet-root. Elizabeth, ever at their side, endeavoured to enliven their agricultural survey by, ever and anon, pointing out some beauty of the landscape, or relating some amusing story of the country people living around.

She proposed in a few days to make excursions to the celebrated ruins and lovely scenery of Riveaux and Fountains Abbey; but in these excursions Mr. Drury gave them his company, and was so zealous in pointing out all the beauties or curiosities of the place, that Elizabeth had repeatedly to remind her father that they were ladies whom he was cicerroning, and could not follow him across water-meadows, or through rough dingles without wet feet or torn garments. But Mr. Drury was deaf to all such remonstrances. He pooh-poohed the idea of people coming to see places of interest and not seeing them.

"Come along, girls," he would say, seizing each by an arm, "you must see this," or "you must see that," and he bore them away rapidly over rocks or across brooks, or through meadows up to the knees in wet grass. Miss Drury protested that he would give his friends their deaths, and the young ladies themselves, finding hesitation useless, made the best of the situation, followed, full of laughter, and glowing with warmth, and on the principle of Walter Scott, that—

> "A summer night in greenwood spent
> Is but to-morrow's merriment."

Elizabeth Drury had, before starting, however, warned them to take with them dry stockings and shoes, and on returning to their inn they found the wisdom of the precaution.

Time flew happily away at Garnside, and our young friends, at the end of three weeks, returned to Woodburn, in raptures with their Yorkshire visit; with redoubled attachment

to Elizabeth Drury, and with many amusing anecdotes of the *empressé* temperament of Mr. Drury, who was a high authority in the West Riding in all branches of agricultural life and stock. He attended all meetings on such topics, made speeches which were received with great respect, and was consulted by gentlemen and noblemen on all questions of rural economy. Yet, said they, his lease was on the point of expiring, and Elizabeth had expressed a zealous wish that he might find a farm somewhere in Nottinghamshire, not far from her new but beloved friends. Mr. Drury had fallen in readily with the idea. He liked the account of the country, as Elizabeth had given it to him, of the people, and liked the idea of trying his skill on a new kind of ground, and, perhaps, of introducing some proofs of it amongst a fresh class and in a fresh field.

"That," said Mr. Woodburn, "is a thing not so easy of accomplishment. Farms in a

fertile and pleasant neighbourhood like this, are not easily picked up. There are generally ten candidates for any one farm that falls out."

The girls said thoughtfully that this was true.

"Well," said George, who had listened markedly to this conversation, "I don't know that such a project is impracticable. I have been told by Barrowclouch of Bilts' Farm, that he would not object to dispose of his lease to a responsible man who could pay the whole money down."

"Did he say that?" asked Mr. Woodburn.

"He did," said George, "for he has another farm in Leicestershire, which he prefers; and he had no doubt that his landlady, who lives in London, would accept a good responsible tenant of his recommendation as direct holder of the lease, so that he might be himself freed from all responsibility, without which he could not give up the farm."

"Well, that is a chance, indeed," said Mr. Woodburn. "I should not have dreamed of such a thing."

The ladies were in raptures at the prospect of having Elizabeth Drury so near them. They proposed to write off at once to her, and tell her of this opening.

"Not so fast," said George, "let me see Barrowclouch, and know whether he remains in the same mind. Men often talk of things when they are not very definite or near, which they draw out of when the thing is put nakedly before them."

George rode up to Bilts' Farm, made the inquiry, and returned, saying that Barrowclouch stuck to his expressed intention, and Ann was authorised to write to Elizabeth with the news. This was done; a prompt reply brought the joyful assurance that her father was delighted with the opportunity, and would in another week be at Woodburn Grange to see the Farm.

Great was the exultation in the Woodburn family. All rejoiced in the prospect of having Elizabeth so near, and Mr. Woodburn in the prospect of so accomplished an agriculturist coming amongst them.

In the specified time Mr. Trant Drury made his appearance by coach at Castleborough, where he was received by George and driven over to Woodburn. His pleasure in the beauty and fertility of the country was great. He thought it rather too much encumbered with wood and hedges, but still it was a fine and, he was sure, a *responding* country to the cultivator. Mr. Woodburn and George accompanied Mr. Trant Drury to Bilts' Farm. This farm lay on the ascending ground betwixt Woodburn and Hillmartin. It was well cultivated, and all the fences in good order. It consisted of three hundred acres, one half in tillage and the other in pasture. The house was a large red brick house, tall and square, standing at the western end of a

large square garden inclosed in a high brick wall. The house occupied the greater portion of the western end, and within the garden was a perfect retirement. Near the house were flower beds, but the principal part of the garden was occupied with vegetables, with espalier fruit-trees along the walks, and fruit-trees on the walls. A summer-house in one corner offered a pleasant place for enjoyment in fine weather, and, as appeared very common in that part of the country, an upper room gave a view over the country round, which was shut out below. There were extensive farm buildings near the house, and a fine collection of hay and corn ricks, showing the abundant produce of the land. A few very tall and large oak trees grew about near the house and farm-yard, but in general the farm was rather naked of wood, and had unobstructed view of its finely ploughed lands on its slopes, and flocks and herds tranquilly grazing in its pastures.

Farmer Barrowclouch received the gentlemen in a straightforward way. Took them over the house, the garden, the buildings, the land. Showed the drainage to be good; stated how many quarters of corn it would produce per acre, how many tons of hay, how many sheep or cattle it would graze; and detailed the chief principles of his management. Mr. Drury, like a good man of business, who was about to make a bargain, did not attempt to depreciate the farm, its situation, or its produce, but was careful not to express any decided enthusiasm about it. He said he would candidly avow that he thought it a good workable farm; and proceeded at once to ask what Mr. Barrowclouch expected as good-will, and what was the rental, as well as the rates and taxes. All these particulars being given and entered by him in his note-book, he took a day or two to reflect on the subject, and they made their adieus. This day or two was spent at

Mr. Drury's desire in riding about with George or Mr. Woodburn, or both, to see the general condition of the farms around. Mr. Drury then paid a visit alone to Mr. Barrowclouch, where, like an able negotiant, he battled out the terms with him, and returned saying that he had agreed to take and enter on the farm at Lady-day. The memorandum of agreement was drawn up and mutually signed, and a more formal one would be sent him from Mr. Barrowclouch's solicitor. In the meantime Mr. Barrowclouch would endeavour to procure the consent of his landlady to receive Mr. Drury as sole holder of the lease—the agreement being contingent on this circumstance. They had, he said, settled the amount of good-will, and had formed a general idea of the value of the crops in the ground to be taken at Lady-day, subject to their then condition : and a valuer for each party and umpire were to be agreed upon. These contingencies falling

out favourably, which he quite expected, they would see him at Bilts' Farm at Lady-day. Much satisfaction was felt and expressed both at Woodburn Grange and Garnside Farm, and we may leave these affairs thus well and prospectively arranged, to note one or two other events of the interim.

During the later autumn months, Henry Clavering said that his father was far from being right. He had ceased to take interest in his observatory, had not once gone out with his gun, was busy amongst his papers, and, though apparently cheerful, had a sort of shadow on his countenance that he did not like. He had wished him to consult Dr. Leroy, but he said, "Why should I? nothing ails me." Henry Clavering had, however, asked Dr. Leroy to come and dine with them, and then said, before his father, that he did not think his father was quite well. He wished he would have a little conversation with Sir Emanuel.

"What nonsense!" said Sir Emanuel; "I never was better. In good spirits, indeed, I am not. Who can be, in this hangman weather, with the air charged with vapour, with the heaviest atmospheric pressure, and the watery clouds lying almost on the ground? In a gloom of Cimmeria itself—how can one be bright?"

Dr. Leroy, however, talked cheerfully with Sir Emanuel about his health; felt his pulse, —said it was rather sluggish, but that there was no organic mischief that he could perceive, but recommended cheerful society, and everything that exhilarated the spirits. To Henry he remarked afterwards that he must not say a word to lower the tone of Sir Emanuel's spirits, but that he must say to himself privately that there was a tendency in his father to that mysterious condition called a breaking-up, which required nothing so much as a cordial and pleasant tone of life around the patient. His

father, certainly, had no specific disease—but at the same time he certainly was not well. Mr. Clavering said that was precisely his own idea, and he engaged Dr. Leroy to come up often, as if coming to see and chat with himself, so that he might judge of his father's actual state. Whenever asked about his father at Woodburn Grange, Henry Clavering said he could not say that he was well; he could not say, from time to time, that he was so well as he had been. He perceived in him a gradual decline of activity and good spirits, yet he would not confess to any ailment. It made him very melancholy.

In mid-winter, and at midnight, and such a midnight!—the winds roaring and tearing furiously through the trees, snow driving thickly before the tyrannous blast, darkness profound adding to the bewildering effect of the whirling pother of the snow-flakes,—there was a loud ringing at the lodge-gate of Fair Manor. Sylvanus Crook looked out of his

chamber window, half stifled by the blast that rushed in upon him, and demanded who was there.

"Mr. Clavering," said the well known voice of Henry Clavering. "Call up Mrs. Heritage, I must see her. It is a case of life and death."

"Certainly, certainly," said Sylvanus, quickly shutting the window. In a very little time he had the gates open, and told the coachman to drive in.

"The family have been in bed two hours," said Sylvanus: "but they will soon hear," stoutly pulling a bell at the door which communicated with the upper storey of the house.

"I am afraid we shall greatly alarm them," said Henry Clavering, in a mournful tone.

"No," said Sylvanus, "no; such calls are not unfrequent here. My mistress will understand it."

Very quickly there was a casement open, and a voice asked what was wanted.

"Henry Clavering desires to see our mistress," said Sylvanus.

"I will open the door," said the voice, and in a very little time, the great front door was thrown open, and a servant appeared with a light. It was the tall prim form of Sukey Priddo, the housekeeper.

"Oh! do come in, Mr. Clavering!" she said, as she stood guarding the lamp from the furious wind that swept in the wild surges of the snow. "What a night for any mortal to be out in."

"And yet I must ask Mrs. Heritage to venture into it," said Mr. Clavering.

"She will soon be ready," said Mrs. Priddo, as a matter of course, leading the way into a large but very plainly-furnished room. She then took Mr. Clavering's cloak, which in the brief moment of leaving the carriage, and mounting the stairs, was

covered with a white load. This she gave to another servant to shake out, and then breaking up a large coal on the fire, called the "raking-coal" in that part of the country, and which is put on to burn slowly through the night, she immediately set on a small kettle to boil water for coffee. In a few minutes a tray with tea-cups was set on the table, and soon after Mrs. Heritage entered, wrapped in a thick cloak, and with a black quilted hood on her head. As she advanced to take the hand of Henry Clavering, he was struck with her resemblance to some handsome middle-aged abbess, her fine, solemn, but kindly features, showing with a monastic gravity and grace within her hood.

"I fear thou bringest us but indifferent tidings of thy dear father's health," she said, most sympathetically. Henry found himself unable to reply, but sat down, buried his face in his hands, and sobbed violently.

"We must not grieve too much," said

Mrs. Heritage; "all things are in our Father's hand, and are surely for the best. He does not afflict us willingly, and he afflicts us only to instruct and improve. Let me give thee a cup of coffee; we must not delay." She handed a cup of warm coffee to Henry, which he took and held mechanically. "Drink it, dear friend," she said, "it will do thee good on our way," and ringing the bell, she said, taking up another cup and handing it to the servant, "give that to the coachman: poor man, what a night for him."

"And what a night for you!" said Henry Clavering. "How can I ask you to brave such a night? and yet your presence would be such a comfort to my dear father."

"Dear friend," said Mrs. Heritage, smiling tenderly, "it is what our dear Lord expects of us. In life or in death, it is our duty and our privilege to follow Him. Now, shall we go?"

Henry Clavering had set down his cup of

coffee untasted. Mrs. Heritage, however, compelled him to take it, and having taken one herself, and tied a warm woollen handkerchief around her throat, she led the way to the door. Henry Clavering gave her his arm down the steps, where Sylvanus Crook stood with the carriage-door in his hand ready to open it and shut them in, looking more like a pillar of snow than a man, and the coachman on his seat, looking a living snow-pile.

Silently rolled the carriage away through the mass of snow, and with difficulty hitting the gateway, disappeared beyond. The story of that drive of only two miles, if related at full, would leave only the wonder that it was accomplished at all. Darkness, deep snow-drifts, that blew down across the way, and the blinding, bewildering effect of the snow-storm, amid the roar and fury of the winds, made every step one of the highest daring, peril, and difficulty. Repeatedly Henry

Clavering had to get out, and assist the coachman in forcing his way through some huge track of snow, or in rounding the extremity of some fallen tree, without overturning into a ditch or down some steep descent. But through all Mrs. Heritage sate calm and resigned, expressing no care on her own account, but much concern for Henry Clavering, the coachman, and the poor horses.

At length the terrible journey was completed, and Mrs. Heritage, taking off her upper garments, was conducted by Henry Clavering to his father's chamber. The whole household was up, and wearing the solemn aspect, and moving about with the silent steps, of those who seem to feel that the angel of death is amongst them. As they ascended the ample staircase, hung with the portraits of the ancestors of five hundred years, and embellished with steel casques of rare workmanship, supported on consoles, and

suits of ancient, dusky, or more recent and brightly burnished armour, richly inlaid with gold—suits borne valiantly by their owners in fields renowned in English history, the grave Friend said to herself, "No, not all these things can detain those whom the Lord calls. These all, in their places, tell the tale of departures."

The next moment her conductor opened softly a chamber door and as softly closed it after her. He led her forward through the dimly-lighted room to the bed in which lay Sir Emanuel Clavering, pale and wasted, but with a bright eye which turned towards her, watching earnestly her approach, and as she drew near extending his hand to grasp hers. Around were several relatives, whom Mrs. Heritage did not particularly notice.

"How kind, how very kind," he said, warmly clasping her hand. "I could not leave, without seeing you. How very kind to come at such an hour." His son had fallen

on his knees by the bed, and laying his clasped hands on his father's arm pressed his face against it. In a chair close to the bed-head Mrs. Heritage perceived Thomas Clavering, Sir Emanuel's brother, the rector, who rose up, took the left hand of Mrs. Heritage, pressed it to his lips passionately, and sat down again without a word.

"Give Mrs. Heritage a chair," said Sir Emanuel; "I want to talk to her a little." The rector gave her his chair with a rapid courtesy, and fell on his knees by his nephew.

"I did so long for you, dear Mrs. Heritage," said Sir Emanuel. "I wanted to say that your good wishes for me and labour with me, I trust, are not quite thrown away. I have thought much and deeply on all that you have said. Yes, truly this is a world in which gigantic difficulties present themselves to our reason. I cannot surmount those difficulties, but I have resolved to leave them.

How can I or any man fathom the depths of the Infinite? It is vain—it is foolish to expect it—we will leave the illimitable to clear itself up in the illimitable of existence."

"Thou dost well," said Mrs. Heritage.

"It is true, dear madam—it is true that as all visible things are slipping away—as the foundations of this existence are sinking beneath me, I feel the want of some hand to lay hold on; some power to bear me up and save me. My nature calls for a saviour—and it is only in the Saviour you have so often pointed out to me that I find what my soul craves. They are the divine assurances which He gives in the Gospel that alone meet the demands of my inner being. But oh! my dear friend, can I hope to receive the gracious acceptance of Him whom I have through the whole of a proud life rejected and refused to believe necessary."

Mrs. Heritage took from her pocket a small

New Testament, and read the parable of the Prodigal Son. Then laying down the book on the bed, she said: "Dear friend—dear brother, thou hast had the divine answer of our blessed Redeemer. It is only the narrowness of our conceptions, the coldness of our hearts, that render doubtful the offer of Almighty Love. He who sent down His only Son to seek and save sinners; He who came down to convince them by His death of the infinity of love; He who said, 'If thy brother sin against thee not seventy, but seventy times seven, forgive him,' shall He not forgive more abundantly? 'Fear not little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'" Then laying aside her hood, she softly sunk on her knees, and in her plain muslin cap, and with an uplifted, and as it seemed, glorified countenance, as her hand still retained that of the dying man, she said,—

"Oh, dear Father, receive this dear son to

Thy love and Thy eternal peace. It is Thou who hast raised in his soul the cry for Thy help and forgiveness. It is Thou who hast winged his soul with fears that he might the more eagerly fly to Thy divine arms. It is Thou who hast shown him the emptiness of earth, the fathomless gulf of absence from Thee—the alone eternal and substantial foundation of all life. All these are the calls of Thy measureless affection for Thy repentant creature. And now, O Lord! let the mantle of Thy peace, the living spirit of Thy consolation, fall on his heart. Into the mansions of the glorified, into the assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect, receive his tendered and regenerated soul. Amen!"

"Amen!" said the quivering voice of the rector. "Amen!" said the faint voice of the dying man. The ministering Friend, as she still continued on her knees, felt a short, quick tremor of the hand still in hers. She arose, stood calm and stately, and said, "All

is well with our dear brother, he has entered into peace, now and for ever. Blessed be the Lord!"

The two relatives knew the meaning of those words, and the tears gushed forth in fresh torrents. Mrs. Heritage sat still and prayerful by them. She knew that words were useless, but that the sympathy of a loving friend was felt in such an hour. She did not leave the house of mourning till the next morning, but assisted Mrs. Thomas Clavering in making all the arrangements necessary on so solemn an occasion.

"I knew he would not be long," said Mrs. Clavering, "for a few weeks ago he said one Sunday morning, 'Let everybody go to church. Such a thing he had never said in his life before."

As Mrs. Heritage drove home, the storm had spent itself. The covering of snow lay deep over the landscape, and glittered in the pale sunbeams falling from a sky of deep and

cloudless blue. There were tremendous drifts of snow which lay across her way, and fantastic wreaths swept down from the hedges which formed caves and twisted pillars of the radiant substance. But Mr. Heritage had despatched men with spades to cut a way for the carriage through the drifts, and had thus made the return easy through the hushed and reposing scene, in keeping with the solemn tone of Mrs. Heritage's feelings.

CHAPTER IV.

LETTY'S WEDDING.

The wild, tempestuous weather, which attended the death of Sir Emanuel Clavering, renewed itself at his funeral. In the interval betwixt these events there had been calm, clear days. The snow lay white and dazzling over the whole landscape; the nights were brilliant with stars, which seemed to derive double lustre from the frost. The funeral of Sir Emanuel took place in the little church just by, and was conducted by a neighbouring clergyman, a friend of the rector's. None were invited but the immediate relatives, and the tenants, who received a notice that their presence at the church would be regarded as a mark of respect. But in the middle of the

night preceding the day of the funeral, the wind again rose, snow began to fall, and the two elements seemed as if they had concerted to make the scene as miserable as possible. The winds raged, the snow fell, and drove as in a riotous madness. A stupendous ash-tree on the lawn, under which Sir Emanuel had been fond of sitting and reading, was blown down ; the windows of his observatory on the hill, on the north side were driven in, and a small turret on the house, in which he kept piles of papers, fell inwards, and buried them. It was necessary to cut a way from the hall door to the church door, through the deep snows, amidst which six stout yeomen bore the coffin, staggering in the howling, tossing winds. Such was the war of the storm in the trees about the church and the rector's house, that the voice of the clergyman could scarcely be heard as he read the burial service. The tenants, who came from some distance, gained their homes with much

difficulty. For three or four days the weather continued its riotous character, and a winter of unremittent severity followed. The snows covered the hedges of the fields so completely that, when hard frozen, people walked over them as on a highway. Great numbers of sheep were lost in the mountain districts, and many people in different parts of the kingdom perished on heaths and moors amid the snows. Farmers were at their wits'-end for food for their cattle, which had all to be kept up. Alternate thaws and frosts hung from the eaves of buildings icicles a yard or more long, and a sudden frost following on driving rain, froze the wings of birds to their bodies, and in that condition incalculable numbers were seized and destroyed. The spring was late in coming, and was attended by floods, doing immense damage in their headlong course.

Such an outburst of weather at the death and funeral of Sir Emanuel Clavering was

certain to excite in the imagination of the country people round the most awful ideas of the mortal exit of a man who had acquired so mysterious a reputation. It is a favourite idea that tempests of a fearful character often attend the departure of men remarkable for their daring deeds in life—deeds not very scrupulous regarding the rights or lives of men. Such was the case at the deaths of Cromwell and many other great innovators or troublers of the earth. The people believe that the great enemy of mankind thus comes to signalise the departure of those who have been his devoted servants on a large scale. The country people about Cotmanhaye, and far around, did Sir Emanuel the honour of classing him with this satanically distinguished tribe, though they could point to no actions but such as were kindly and benevolent.

But the black art was ample enough, in their opinions, for any disturbances of nature,

and this they firmly believed that he had practised. The driving in of his observatory windows, the fall of the little turret where he kept his mysterious papers, were facts of a significance not to be withstood. They did not take into their consideration that this tempestuous and severe winter extended far beyond any influence or knowledge of Sir Emanuel—that it extended, indeed, not only over the whole kingdom, but over the whole of Europe. *Their* knowledge and experience lay only within a very minute circle ; but then Sir Emanuel died, and those furious elements battled over his dying head. That was enough. Many were the stories, by the cottage and the village inn firesides, of the horrors of that night at Cotmanhaye Manor. Of the strange sights, strange sounds, burning blue of the fire-flames, the howling of dogs, and the strange neighing of horses in the turmoil of the winds.

It was said that all the clergy had been

collected for miles round to endeavour to lay the devil, and prevent him seizing on his victim—the only clergyman present being poor, dear Thomas Clavering, who was too much overwhelmed with grief to be able to articulate more than a few words of affection, and of confidence in the love and merits of the Saviour. It was said that Mrs. Heritage had been sent for when all the efforts of the clergy failed, and that in the midst of her prayers the turret fell, the observatory windows flew shivered to atoms, and then all was still. The devil had thus gone off in a fury of disappointment. All remembered the calm, clear weather that attended this good woman back, and which lasted till the funeral, when it broke out again, and raged on for days and weeks. Not all the reasonings of a Bacon, or the eloquence of a Chatham, could have driven from the minds of the rural population the fixed idea that Sir Emanuel had been accustomed to practices of

an awful character, or that the pre-eminent piety of Mrs. Heritage had most signally triumphed over the Prince of Darkness. For twenty years after, the grand epoch of all relative dates was the hard winter when Sir Emanuel Clavering died.

In the little circle of Woodburn his departure left another gap. Of late years Sir Emanuel had lived more and come out more amongst his neighbours; and, where he had been known intimately, he was greatly beloved. In the families of Woodburn, Heritage, and Degge, he left a deep and lasting regret.

During the winter Henry Clavering, now Sir Henry, was for the most part in London, attending to family affairs. He had not ventured to call at Woodburn Grange before leaving, being much affected by the death of his father, the Claverings having strong family attachments; but he wrote a very kind farewell through a letter to Ann, and to

her expressed a hope of a more cheerful prospect as regarded their relationship to each other. Ann herself could not help cherishing an idea that the change of sentiment in his father at last would operate a change in his own mind. Several times in the course of the winter he wrote more and more happily, and promised himself much of her society in spring.

As for other matters at Woodburn Grange, they were by no means dull. The wedding of Letty with Thorsby was to take place in May, and Thorsby was there every few days overflowing with fun and animal spirits. Since Betty Trapps knew that this marriage was inevitable, though she continued privately to shake her head over it, she *endeavoured* to be more respectful to Thorsby, out of respect to Letty; but Thorsby's ebullient temperament sometimes tried her very hard, especially when he indulged himself with making merry over the Methodists, which he

was very apt to do when Betty was waiting at table. Betty said "some people were hetter and some were heeler (that is, irritable or calm in disposition). For her part, she did not pretend to be ower heeler—tread on a worm, and it would turn—and if people would pinch her, she was pretty sure, she said, to cry out." One day Thorsby was very merry over a master manufacturer in Castleborough, who was a great leader amongst the Methodists, and kept a horse for the use of the preachers who went into the country round, and rather irreverently called it God's horse. Betty defended the title, and thought the profanity was in laughing at the manufacturer who kept it. The next time that Thorsby was obliged by the weather to stay all night at the Grange, he found that Betty had made him an "apple-pie bed;" that is, she had turned up the upper sheet to the pillow, so that, on getting into bed, he found himself stopped half-way. This, how-

ever, was nothing to the expression of her indignation conveyed to him by a frog, a bit of furze, or even a wasp, being put into his bed.

Thorsby, on another occasion, excited Betty's wrath by asserting that he thought he could preach better than a favourite preacher of Betty's. "Preach, i' faith!" said Betty, as she shifted Thorsby plate—"Ay, may be, as well as old Parson Markham, of Rockville, who buzzes like a dumbledore* in a pitcher." The conversation turning on somebody who had been unfortunate, Thorsby remarked that people ought not to expect to get on who did not exert themselves. "Oh, beleddy"—a great word of Betty's, meaning, by-lady, from the old phrase, "By our lady"—Betty remarked, "I always see folks run to help a lazy duck that lies on its back and quackles, while stirring

* Humble-bee.

ducks may take care of themselves as they can."

Such little skirmishes, however, only served to enliven the dinner-table; but Thorsby was quite as fond of quizzing his Quaker acquaintance, which was nearly as repugnant to Betty's feelings, who had a profound admiration of Mrs. Heritage; and who said she did not like to hear any religious people fleered at. Thorsby was very merry one day at the expense of Sylvanus Crook, who, on hearing some one say that he could find any text in the Bible that any one could mention, had asked him where was the text which spoke of twenty-nine knives and never a fork. The man, who was a Methodist too, had stoutly declared that there was no such text, and Thorsby was of his opinion. Betty Trapps said Mr. Thorsby had something to learn yet, before he began to preach, for there was such a text, and it was in the first chapter and ninth verse of the book of

Ezra. Thorsby jumped up and got a Bible, and found in the list of the vessels and other apparatus of the Temple nine-and-twenty knives.

"But," said Thorsby, "it does not say 'and never a fork.'"

"It need not," said Betty, "because there was never a fork."

"Ah!" said Thorsby, "I see now—that was Crook's way of putting it. But they are not always so sharp, these Quakers," added Thorsby. "There is Solomon Jordan, the draper, you should have seen him one fine evening last summer; he is one of the plainest of the plain in his attire. Slipping on his warehouse stairs, he had dislocated his collar-bone and had his left arm in a sling. Sitting at his desk near his shop window, he observed an old militia officer, who had been at a festive dinner with the officers of his regiment, drop his spectacles in the middle of the street. Being well

charged with wine, he made many vain attempts to stoop and take up the spectacles. Every time he staggered past them, and turned round to make an attempt equally hopeless. Solomon Jordan, believing the officer to lodge at a house just opposite, hastened out, picked up the spectacles, and offered his right arm to conduct the officer to his lodgings. The old captain was full of the most grateful acknowledgments of this politeness; but, on arriving at the door, he looked up and exclaimed,—'But, my dear sir, these are not my lodgings; mine are away ever so far up the street.'

"They began to march on, but the officer perceiving that Mr. Jordan was without his hat, suddenly stopped, took off his cap and feather, and put them on the head of the astonished Friend.

"'Take it off!' exclaimed Solomon; 'take it off, friend!'

"'No, no,' replied the officer, energetically,

'I could not think of such a thing as your going bare-headed up the street, and you so extremely kind to me.'

"'Take off thy cap!' exclaimed Solomon, more loudly, 'or I'll not go another step with thee.'

"As Solomon would not move, notwithstanding all the protestations of the officer, and could not get away, the officer holding his arm as in a vice; and as he could not raise the other arm, which was lamed, to take the cap off, the scene became highly ludicrous. The people in the street, and there were many, saw the dilemma and began to laugh, and the boys to run from all sides, crying, 'Mr. Jordan is 'listed for a soldier,—Mr. Jordan is 'listed!' There was a great running, and soon a great crowd, in the midst of which the Friend was angrily demanding the officer to take off the offensive cap; and the officer, with equal zeal, protesting against the Friend proceeding bare-

headed. Sometimes the officer, for a moment, would concede the point to Solomon and replace his cap on his own head, but almost directly would whip it off again and put it on Solomon's, which was the signal for a fresh roar of laughter from the people. Thus they advanced, now stopping and parleying—now moving on again ; the cap sometimes on the soldier's head, sometimes on the Friend's, till they reached the officer's lodgings with half the idle people of Castleborough at their heels. "I think," added Thorsby, "Friend Jordan will never again take compassion on a disabled soldier."

"More's the pity that he did," said Betty Trapps. "I'd have left the intossicated old fellow to plough the street up with his nose afore I'd ha' helped him ; but such things are just egg and milk for some folks : " meaning that such satirical stories were delicious to Thorsby.

In March a great excitement was occa-

sioned at Woodburn by the arrival of the Drurys to take possession of their farm. Mr. Drury took up his quarters at the Grange during the transfer of the farm with its crops and stock to him, for he had disposed of his own stock to his successor, and took to that on Bilts' farm, as the most suitable to the country; for, with all Mr. Trant Drury's theoretical notions, he had great faith in the fact, that experience of the character of a particular country and of the stock most suitable to it, was a guide not to be lightly neglected. He brought with him, however, a variety of new apparatus, and some teams and waggons, which excited the curiosity of his agricultural neighbours. The Woodburns, as friends of Mr. Drury's, declined being engaged for him, or either of them, as his valuer, but recommended Mr. Norton, of Peafield. All seemed to go on well in the valuation, till one day Mr. Drury came home very pale and ill, saying he had had a fall

down Mr. Barrowclouch's cellar-steps as they descended to examine those regions, and Mr. Drury blamed Mr. Barrowclouch extremely for having his cellar-steps where there was a sudden turn in them unguarded by a hand-rail. Mr. Drury had evidently received a great shake, though no bones were broken, and was under the doctor's hands for a fortnight, greatly to his chagrin at such a crisis. He continually murmured to himself that it was "most unfortunate—most unfortunate." Mr. Woodburn and George, however, assured him that in the hands of Mr. Norton all would go as well as in his own. Mr. Drury looked rather astonished at such an opinion, and shook his head incredulously. It was evident that he thought his absence on the occasion, although all was left in the hands of two most competent and honourable men, a grand misfortune.

All, however, came to an end as everything does; the valuation was brought in, examined

by Mr. Drury, and the amount paid with the remark, that it might have been worse. Before Mr. Barrowclouch left, and before Mr. Drury had got out again, Mr. Woodburn went up to say good-bye to his neighbour of many years, the worthy old farmer.

"I hope all has gone off satisfactorily," said Mr. Woodburn, "in the valuation. Mr. Drury seems satisfied."

"Oh, is he?" said the farmer; "then I am sure I ought to be. They say it is an ill wind as blows nobody any profit, and bless me, if Mr. Drury had not fallen down those cellar-steps, I don't think I should be worth so much by a thousand pound as I am. Pray God that he gets all right soon, and then I'm sure we shall both be right."

"But how do you mean?" asked Mr. Woodburn. "Mr. Drury, of course, could not interfere with the valuers."

"Well, no," said Mr. Barrowclouch, laughing, "if valuers were always as stiff and

peremptory as they should be. But my man was rather a soft one, and Mr. Drury is such a hurrying sort of man; bless me! he seemed as though he would ride rough shod right over us all. 'Oh!' he would say, 'that is but a poor affair—that is not worth more than so and so, and that's hardly worth valuing at all;' and he kept hurrying along, saying time was precious, and had the valuers here and there and yonder, quick as lightning. 'Mr. Drury,' said I, 'let you and me go away, and leave the gentlemen to their cool judgment, *we* have no business to say a word.' 'Oh no!' he would say, 'he must see how all was done, and the gentlemen could settle all afterwards.' But I could see my man began to be quite flabbergasted, and to get a wonderful opinion of your Mr. Drury, and my heart began to sink in me. I felt that my effects would go very cheap, when, all at once, some taters were mentioned in the cellar. 'Let's see 'em,' says

Mr. Drury, and off he goes to the house, and calls for a candle. 'Hold hard!' said I, 'hold hard! have a care! the cellar steps are dangerous to a stranger. Let me go first with a light.' 'Dangerous,' said he, in his off-hand way, 'how can cellar steps in a decent house be dangerous?' Up he catches the light and hurries on. 'For God's sake,' said I, 'keep back;' but it was no use, on he goes, holding up his light, and down he goes bang to the bottom. Oh Lors! oh Lors! I made sure he were killed, and I heard a dreadful groan, and there he lay as dead."

"You had no handrail, Mr. Drury says."

"No, that's true," said the farmer; "nor there's been none since it was a house, but I never heard of anybody afore tumbling down. Everybody is warned when they come fresh, and they awllis tak' a light, and look where they goon'. But Mr. Drury is such a hurrying, driving sort of a man; he seems as if he'd drive sun and moon, and th' seven stars

afore him. However, I hope he'll be no worse for it. I am sure I'm not."

Mr. Woodburn thought there was something very characteristic of his new neighbour in Mr. Barrowclouch's remarks; he thought he saw symptoms of the same on-driving, overweening temperament in him, even in conversation. He was destined to see this only too fully confirmed.

A few weeks saw the Drurys settled at Bilts' Farm. The furniture had arrived, and was all arranged—the house had become the fit residence for a gentleman. Elizabeth Drury, to her great delight and theirs, was living permanently amid her new friends. The reader can imagine the joy of the young people,—the Woodburns and Miss Heritage: the visitings and re-visitings at the Grange, at Fair Manor, at Bilts' Farm. Elizabeth Drury had her own handsome horse, and joined her friends in their rides. The spring was advancing in light and daily growth of

beauty and sweetness. May, and the marriage of Thorsby and Letty were approaching. Busy was the time at Woodburn Grange in the various preparations for it. Thorsby was all life and jollity. His house in Castleborough had been put into the most perfect order for the great event.

At length May sent forth one of her fairest, most lovely, and odorous mornings for the occasion. There was an unusual bustle in every house and cottage in Woodburn. All was expectation in every dwelling to see the carriages driving up from the Grange, and there they came! But why need we particularise the persons and details of the scene? There, however, were three charming bridesmaids, Miss Woodburn, Miss Degge, and Miss Drury, in their white dresses and white veils, in the first carriage, followed by Sir Simon and Lady Degge, in their most splendid equipage, then Mr. and Mrs. Drury, accompanied by George Wood-

burn, and lastly, Mr. and Mrs. Woodburn, with the lovely, blushing Letty, with somewhat flushed cheeks, and eyes in which joy and tears stood together. Every creature was out as they passed through the village, and bows and curtseys, and women with apron corners to their eyes, and yet with the most beaming delight on their faces. At the church appeared already, Harry Thorsby, in superb costume, and his best man, Sir Henry Clavering, his mother, and two or three other friends. The ceremony was performed by the worthy old Thomas Clavering, assisted by Mr. Markham. All went off well. You, dear readers, may see the carriages dashing away again down to the Grange, and the streaming eyes, noddings, and waving hands of the villagers, and dancings and skippings of the children; you may imagine the *déjeûner*, and all the speeches, and—away the happy pair are gone to the Highlands of Scotland, where, no doubt, they will enjoy

themselves amid the rocks, and hills, and lakes, and heather.

Meantime a certain blank and another degree of shade, have fallen on Woodburn Grange. When Letty, that sunbeam which was ever darting here and there, yet always making bright the house, returns, it will be to Castleborough. Not far off, to be sure, but still not exactly at Woodburn. Meantime, Ann and George, too, have their friend, Miss Drury, to enliven them by her genial and ever lively society. There are frequent passings between the Grange and Bilts' Farm, where Mr. Trant Drury is always busy, though there really, just now, seems little to do, but for the dews to fall, and the crops to grow in the sunshine.

A month after the wedding Mr. and Mrs. Thorsby returned, full of happiness and health, to commence their new life in Castleborough—to receive Letty's new circle of friends. That over, things resumed some-

thing of their old routine. Though Letty was no longer a resident at Woodburn Grange, but of Castleborough, greatly admired by a wide circle of new friends, yet she was frequently taking that way in her drives, and bringing in floods of sunshine and life with her ; and she and Thorsby generally spent their Sundays there. Visits to the town were more attractive to the Woodburns, and more frequent. George always dined at his sister's on market-day, and Mrs. Woodburn and Ann found a considerable number of shoppings and bargainings to make in town. Every one saw, and every one approved, the growing regard of George Woodburn and Elizabeth Drury. No formal engagement was yet made, but both at the Grange and at Bilts' Farm it was looked on as a settled affair, and that with mutual pride and satisfaction. Then there was a little loving intercourse going on at Fair Manor. Dr. Frank Leroy seemed to have found perfect

favour with Miss Heritage, and with her parents. Every one thought him a fortunate fellow with such a lovely and amiable wife, and such a fortune in view: and every one thought that he deserved both, for he was extremely admired for the modesty which clothed so gracefully great knowledge and talent, and esteemed for his good and generous nature. Dr. Leroy was a member of the Society of Friends, though the orthodox did not class him as a "consistent member;" for he dressed and spoke as any other gentleman, having seen a great deal of the world at home and abroad, and learned that religion does not consist of caps and coats, but of great and ennobling principles.

Taking a sober view of the facts just stated, a not very sanguine calculation would conclude that in much less than two years there would be a succession of weddings in this quarter; that Frank Leroy and Millicent Heritage, George Woodburn and Elizabeth

Drury, and, perhaps, Sir Henry Clavering and Ann Woodburn, would have each and all passed into the holy state of matrimony, and that all the romance of that transitive epoch, that young elective life of love merging into sober domestic union, would be passed and gone. Let us see.

CHAPTER V.

MILLICENT HERITAGE AT THE YEARLY MEETING.

Two years have passed, and not one of these marriages has taken place. Causes have been at work which no one without the eye of a seer could well have detected, and yet they all lay in the nature of things. To trace out their operation into events will require some considerable detail. Let us begin at Fair Manor. There we saw everything tending apparently to a happy issue. The strongest affection existed betwixt Dr. Leroy and the fair Millicent. Dr. Leroy was every day extending his practice, and through it his reputation and usefulness. The brief hours that he could steal from his duties he spent at Fair Manor, and the happy lovers

might be seen taking their rides together in the neighbouring country. They often alighted at Woodburn Grange and at Bilts' Farm, and brought an atmosphere of gladness with them. Many pleasant evenings were spent by this little circle of friends at Fair Manor. The marriage of the doctor and Millicent was regarded as a near event. In the very month, however, of May of the year following Letty Woodburn's marriage, the Heritages went up to the Friends' yearly meeting. Mr. and Mrs. Heritage had frequently gone on these occasions, for Mr. Heritage had his banking connections in the capital, at whose houses he saw the most influential Friends in the kingdom, and Mrs. Heritage had often what was called in the Friends' language, a concern upon her in relation to that annual national assembling. Her appearances, as they are termed, in the ministry, both in inspirational speaking and in supplication, that is, in preaching and

prayer, were often very powerful and extraordinary. In them, she often rose into the loftiest and most solemn strains of eloquence. Sometimes these depicted the general, spiritual, and moral condition of the Society; sometimes they were directed to the states of particular individuals, and opened up in such force and startling discernment the minor trials, tendencies, temptations and perils of some person or persons un-named, as caused a silence like death to fall on the meeting,—a hush, in which the spirit of the Allseeing seemed to hover awfully and palpably over it; and in one instance, suicide itself was said to have been driven in horror from the soul which contemplated it. Sometimes the very walls of the meeting-house have seemed to shake under the rush and thunder of the power thus mysteriously let loose over the assembly by the words of a woman, and the whole of the assembled Quakerism then left the place in a still and reflective mood, giving

only a fervid shake of the hand to each other and saying, but not till they had reached their particular abodes,—"that was a very precious opportunity."

Around Mr. and Mrs. Heritage the most orthodox persons moved, and the most orthodox spirit reigned during these great annual visits, and they returned home much refreshed and invigorated for the daily trials of life. Sylvanus Crook would say of them, on such occasions, that the dews of Hermon and of Carmel seemed to have fallen on them, and that they had evidently been in the Lord's banqueting-house, where His banner over them was love.

They had never before taken Millicent with them; but they thought, as she was likely soon to leave their protecting roof and guidance, it were well that she should see one of these great gatherings; see the order and wisdom in which everything was administered, and hear the gifted ministers,

both men and women, from all parts of the kingdom, and make acquaintance with their particular friends and their children. To Millicent, who had spent the greater part of her life in the society of a country town, this visit was the occasion of much delightful anticipation and some nervousness. She had heard of the enormous wealth of some of the London Friends, and that their style and mode of living much differed from their own simple habits. She had an inward shrinking from undergoing the criticism of young men and women who lived in the centre of life and intelligence, and whose eyes must be quick to detect any of the slightest evidences of country breeding. The roar and bustle of London at first confounded her. All appeared hurry, noise, and the long-sought-after perpetual motion. The millionaire bankers, the Messrs. Barrington, were the London agents of her father. They lived a few miles out of town ; but at these times

their houses were so full of their relatives and most intimate connections, that they did not ask the Heritages to take up their quarters with them. They went to airy and ample private lodgings in the outskirts of the city, yet within a short drive to meeting; and Mr. Samuel Barrington, Mr. Heritage's particular friend, and through whom he generally transacted business, invited them to dine and spend the evenings with them after the meetings were over, as often as, according to his phrase, was agreeable to them; and when the yearly meeting was concluded, Millicent was to make a visit of some weeks at their house.

Except to a young lady Friend, no idea can be given of the impression which the first view, and the subsequent attendances of the yearly meetings, made on Millicent. The silence, the calmness, the order with which several hundreds of Friends, men and women, assembled was something very imposing to a

youthful imagination. True, Millicent had seen a simple image of this fuller assembly in the quarterly meetings of her own county; but there she knew almost every individual, their history and connections. There still existed a plainness of manner and of mind, a sort of equality of character and condition, that was familiar to her thoughts. Here came together a class of persons of a position, a wealth, and an education to which she was unaccustomed, and which made her feel as if she were a novice in a higher range of life.

The general aspect of the assembly was plain. The men were almost wholly dressed in the peculiar garb and cut of the Society, still, with differences, advancing from the most marked and almost grotesque formality of costume to a very near approach to the fashion, but the plainest fashion, of the outer world. Amongst the women, the distinctions were still more prominent. There was a delightfully neat and pure character

of dress throughout the whole female side of the meeting, for the men and women sate separated. A general tendency to dove-colour prevailed in both dresses and bonnets ; but the younger portion displayed a smarter tint of colour, even in the dove, and a certain elegance of style, especially in the bonnets, which showed that taste, and even fashion, could no more be excluded from the younger branches of the Friend world, especially the affluent Friend world, than light and air. Youth and beauty would assert their rights as strongly, if unobtrusively, as the more solemn attributes of strong sense, and spiritual development in the older members. Millicent saw with great delight the many charming faces enclosed by the exquisitely neat and often white bonnets. Other young ladies had abandoned the silk bonnet, and assumed straw ones, though of a modest style, and furnished only with the simplest ribbon to tie them with. No gay bows and

ultra-fashion makes had yet dared to invade that ancient sanctuary of plainness and worldly abnegation. In our day all that rigid stand by the order in the outward has fallen like the leaves of autumn, and has not reappeared at spring. The Friend has, in a majority of cases, assimilated himself to the world; and it is a still more satisfactory truth, that the world has, in many things, interiorly assimilated itself to the Friend.

During the course of the yearly meeting, both in the general meetings for worship and in the separate meetings to which the ladies retired to transact their own affairs—for Quakerism was the first institution to invite woman to consider that she had affairs which she could best transact, and that she had faculties intended for use—Millicent saw, with the lively interest of youth, the long row of ministers in the gallery at the head of the meeting, men and women, and heard, sometimes with astonishment, the addresses

there made by persons of both sexes. None, however, appeared to greater advantage than her own mother ; and the high admiration in which she found her held, gave her a deep feeling of gratified pride. In the women's meetings she was equally struck with the ability with which certain ladies addressed this assembly on matters of business, and the practical eloquence to which they had attained. These meetings, and the society which she enjoyed in the evenings at different houses of wealthy and leading Friends, impressed her with a high idea of the solid merits and highly moral and philanthropic tone of the Society. She heard continually discussed those great topics of humanity which have always occupied the mind and aims of Friends. Opposition to slavery and the slave-trade and to war, plans and operations for the reform of prisons, for the extension of education amongst the poor, were everywhere the subjects of conversation. On

these points there were manuscripts read and tracts handed about; and though they had no foreign missions—not being able, on their peculiar religious principles, to establish such works for the propagation of the faith, or to co-operate in those established by other bodies of Christians, unless they were directly moved thereto by the spirit—yet they had "public Friends," as they termed them, occasionally in America or the West Indies, or elsewhere, who were under concern to minister there, and from one or other of these favoured individuals had letters, which they read for the edification of the rest.

Such was the aspect which the Society wore to Millicent during the continuance of the great meeting, which lasted about ten days. She saw, wherever she went, abundant evidence of wealth in the houses of the leading Friends, united to a certain plainness of style. The furniture was good, handsome, and substantial, but made no pretensions to splendour

or fashionable elegance. No works of art adorned those plain walls, except everywhere one large framed engraving, which, from its subject, had procured for it the privilege of breaking through the Friends' law concerning painting and sculpture,—a law with them as strict as that of the Jews,—it was the Treaty of William Penn with the American Indians, from the picture by Benjamin West. This engraving was familiar to Millicent in her own father's dining-room, and greeted her here in every considerable house that she entered. It was well worthy of such an honour, as the memorial, to use the words of Voltaire, "of the only treaty ever made without an oath, and the only one which never was broken." It was deserving of its universal honour, as perhaps the grandest practical disproof which genuine Christian principle has ever triumphantly given to the sophistries and the aggressive crimes of *soi-disant* Christian governments. It was de-

serving of this pre-eminent distinction, for that great action represented by it still towers aloft, high above the highest moral reach of the most 'vaunted statesman. Well, therefore, was it in the Friends to break a little law regarding art, in order to exalt that great eternal law of God, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,"—whether that neighbour be found in the city dwelling or in the wild forest of untutored man. It was an everyday testimony of the Friends that they at least, on some occasions, really believed the words of the Universal Father, that he is no respecter of persons.

But the Yearly Meeting was over, the Friends were hurrying simultaneously away to their different, and many of them very distant, homes by the long coach journeys of those days. Mr. and Mrs. Heritage had taken a loving leave of their dear child, and she was the guest of Mr. Samuel Barrington, at his suburban house. This was truly a

very pleasant home. It was a large old country brick-house, in extensive grounds. The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Barrington, one son, Edmund, and three daughters, all grown up. Two other sons were married, and lived not far off.

The routine of the household very much resembled that of Fair Manor, and of most Friends of that day. Immediately after breakfast, the whole household assembled, and Mr. Barrington read a chapter from the Bible. This over, the carriage appeared at the door, which drove the father and son to business. Dinner was on the table at two o'clock, for the city Friends had not yet fallen into the fashionable evening hours for that meal, even the fashionable hour being rarely later than five o'clock. The gentlemen dined in town, and returned to tea at six. During the day the ladies amused themselves for some hours with their needlework and talk, or took Millicent for a drive, to call on some

other Friends, or made a shopping visit to the city. After tea, Mr. Edmund would propose a ride, in which Millicent and one or more—perhaps all—of his sisters would accompany him. They were extremely kind to Millicent, and she soon found herself a marked object of attention. Her peculiar style of beauty—that fair complexion, and those clear blue eyes, in combination with those long dark eyelashes, those finely-arched and jetty eyebrows, and rich raven hair,—that oriental *tout ensemble* was extremely piquant, even to the sober young men of the Society. Then it was whispered that she was a very wealthy heiress, which by no means detracted from her charms; and the quiet grace and modesty of her manners were in themselves, unknown to her, as *distingué* as if she had been Lady Millicent, instead of simple Millicent, the Friends' Child, as Elizabeth Drury was fond of calling her.

By degrees it dawned on Millicent that

there was a side to the Friends' life in London, at least amongst the opulent, of which she had not dreamed. The Misses Barrington, in their conversations in their own room, launched into topics which at first startled Millicent. They asked her if she had ever been at the theatres, the opera, or at morning and evening concerts? With unfeigned surprise, she replied, "Oh, certainly not! Surely no Friends went to such places!" A pleasant smile passed over the faces of the young ladies: and one of them said to Millicent, patting her gently on the shoulder, "Oh, dear Simplicity! don't thou think we all do nothing but attend meetings and study prison discipline!" They informed her that they frequently went to all these places of amusement.

"But," said Millicent, "it is against the rules of the Society. What do your parents say? How do you answer the Queries?" (Certain queries put to and answered by each

particular and monthly meeting, regarding the maintenance of the principles and practices of the Society.)

"My dear child," said the young Friends, "we leave the meetings to settle all that. They don't know, in fact,—though perhaps they guess a little,—half of what we do: why should they? We don't want to break any moral law, but we cannot live like nuns in a convent when all the London stream of rational enjoyments is flowing around us."

"But your dear parents," said Millicent, "what do they say? Surely they do not approve of such indulgences? Why, I heard Mrs. Barrington myself in the meeting, advocating the careful adherence to our great testimonies, as she called them."

"Dear, good mother!" said these gay young Quakeresses—"yes, she advocates paying all the tithes of mind and conscience, though those are the only tithes Friends will

pay, and we advocate seeing a little pleasure whilst we are young. We don't interfere with her advocacy, and only wish her not to interfere with our little snatches of amusement."

Millicent was all astonishment; but her young friends assured her that they were not peculiar in these habits—plenty of young Friends indulged in the same.

"But," said Millicent, "are you not very much stared at in such public places in your Friend's dress?"

There was a general burst of merriment,—"Oh, dear, dear little Simplicity," said they, "we should no doubt attract a tolerable share of attention if we did sport our Friends attire there: but dress does not grow fast to our bodies. We can suit the dress to the occasion. We have the warrant of an apostle, for 'being all things to all men.'"

Millicent was shocked. "No, don't quote

Scripture," she said, "that is worse than all."

"Forgive me," said the one who used the expression, "it was wrong; but, dear Millicent, we do not wish thee to do anything which thou thinkst is wrong. We, however, see no wrong in an occasional indulgence in a good moral play or opera, with excellent music. We believe them all capable of strengthening what is good in us."

Millicent shook her head. "But I want to know," she continued, "what your parents say—do they willingly permit you to go to such places?"

"We don't ask them," said the young ladies, "we don't want to hurt their feelings; perhaps they know all about it, and don't want to see too deeply, knowing that we would do nothing really wrong. But to leave them as unconcerned as possible, we generally go to tea at one of our brothers and drive thence."

"Dear! dear!" said Millicent, with a sigh,

"I wonder what my dear mother would say to all this?"

"Oh, she would not like it, of course," said the ladies; "but then she has lived so much in the country, and in the strictest habits of Friendism, that she cannot do otherwise; and yet all these things may be, and we firmly believe are, very innocent." Edmund, their brother, treated Millicent's scruples still more lightly.

"Why," he said, "my dear young friend, you don't pin your faith, surely, on all the old fogies stickle about. We must rub a little of this country rust off you. You don't think we are such very wicked people, do you?" —he forgot his thee and thou in speaking of such things. "But never mind, don't trouble your little head about these matters; all things come naturally."

And Millicent saw every reason to regard her young friends as good and conscientious in most essential respects. They were ex-

tremely benevolent, and the sums of money which the family spent on philanthropic objects would have been the fortune of many people. They introduced her to Mrs. Fry, and accompanied her to that lady's meetings with the prisoners in Newgate. They took her to sewing meetings, and book-meetings, and to many a poor abode that they visited with comfort and intelligence. The more she saw of them, the more her heart drew near to them in sympathy. They were what some classed as "Gay Friends," but they were, notwithstanding their vast wealth and position, extremely unassuming and amiable. But gradually Millicent found the circle of her intercourse widening and extending into the regions beyond Quakerdom. She was invited with them not only to drive to the houses of the married brothers, where a much more affluent display of plate, wines, and men-servants was found, but to their aristocratic friends at the West-end, where the splendour

and luxury astonished her. In these parties her young companions no longer retained a trace of the Quaker costume or language. She had observed that Edmund when going to business or to meeting, wore the collarless coat; but when he went out in an evening it was in the full dress of ordinary society. To avoid bringing their departures too prominently before the eyes of their parents, they generally dressed at the house of one of the married brothers, and there changed their dress on their return. Did Mr. and Mrs. Barrington know this? It was a point that Millicent could never clear up, but she rather imagined that they were willingly ignorant, deeming that a current was running in modern society, with which their children mixed, which it was useless to oppose. They were early people, too, like the past generation, and were in bed long before the young people returned from their evening parties.

By degrees the charms of this life had

produced their effect on Millicent. The scenes of luxurious affluence that she witnessed; the tables loaded with silver or silver-gilt plate,—a fortune almost in itself; the elegance of the whole array of the dinner-tables, the trains of richly-liveried servants; the waiting perfect to a movement; the after drawing-room company, the music, the introduction to distinguished people, the marked notice which she herself excited, were not without their effect upon a poetical and sensitive nature like that of Millicent Heritage. She seemed to live in a new world—in a fairy land—in a dream rather than a reality, and was enchanted by it, whilst she continued to ask herself whether she ought to be so.

The time fixed for her visit had expired; but it was renewed at the earnest request of her friends, both old and young. It was impossible, they said, for her to go yet, she had seen nothing of London. Her mother

wrote rather anxiously, fearing that her dear Millicent was leading too gay a life, though with such good people : and yet, with a nice instinct, Millicent had not indulged in her letters home in more than a dry and matter-of-fact account of her doings. She had said that the Barringtons saw a deal of company, and that the splendour and luxury that she witnessed was truly wonderful. Her mother hoped that so much grandeur would not spoil her for her own simple, unostentatious life at home.

One day Mr. Edmund Barrington told Millicent that he had a treat for her. On the morrow Handel's "Messiah" was to be performed, and he had taken tickets for his sisters, for her, and for himself. Millicent objected that she was sure her parents would not like her to go, and, therefore, they must please to leave her at home with Mrs. Barrington.

"What!" said Edmund, "do you object

to *sacred* music? Can there possibly be anything wrong in listening to music so pure, so edifying, so ennobling? It was a perfect perversion of intellect to object to such a thing. She must go. He would not hear of anything else." His sisters joined in the assertion, that it would be really high treason against virtue itself not to go. Millicent made a strong resistance, but it was a sense of duty battling wtih the innate tastes of her nature, and she went.

"Good and right as it is," said Edmund Barrington, "don't tell your mother about it. She cannot surmount her educational prejudices, and why trouble her?"

Millicent was, however, troubled. Charmed as she was by the noble music, which bore her away in a trance-like state to regions of new and lofty pleasure, she could not avoid feeling that it was wrong to conceal anything from her mother. The uneasy feeling hung about her, and came often in the midst of

the pleasantest society with a painful start. But there were other influences at work, which, though she did not perceive them, were yet acting upon her. Everywhere Edmund Barrington was at hand to accompany her into society—to ride out with her. To take her to see sights in London, with one or more of his sisters. One evening he told her that he had brought her a trifling present, and put into her hand a case containing a gold bracelet with a diamond clasp of a very beautiful pattern. Millicent was dumb with amazement. Recovering a little her self-possession, she thanked him very earnestly, but said that it was impossible for her to accept it. It was of too great a value as a gift from a friend whose friendship had yet been of so short a duration. Besides, she could never wear it. To her it would be useless. To some other friend of his it might be different."

The colour rose into Mr. Barrington's

face; he looked deeply chagrined, and said, "Nonsense, Millicent! you can wear it at least here, and at home you can keep it to remind you of your friends in London."

"Oh! I shall never need anything to remind me of my dear, kind friends; of the happy time I have spent here. But please excuse me receiving this. My parents would regard it as a proof of my folly and vanity."

"No," said Mr. Barrington, "do not offend me—do not wound me by the refusal of so trifling a token of my regard."

He hurried away, and Millicent, in deepest trouble, sought one of his sisters to express her embarrassment to. She found them all together, and with some confusion and with gushing tears, begged of them to prevail on their brother to receive the bracelet back, and give her something of less value as a testimony of his friendship. But the sisters unanimously expressed their pleasure in the gift; were charmed with its beauty, and told

her that she thought too much of its mere money value. They instantly clasped it on her wrist, declared it was the very thing which she wanted on occasions of high dress, and that she must by no means hurt their brother's feelings by declining it. They all, they said, wanted to give her something in memory of this visit, so dear to them. They then replaced the bracelet in its case, kissed her affectionately, and one of them carrying it into her bedroom, placed it on the toilette-table.

Dark and sleepless was that night to Millicent Heritage. The gift of the bracelet opened her eyes to what they might have been opened long before, the assiduous attentions and zealous courtesies of Edmund Barrington: the more than ordinary affection of his sisters. It was not the gift which startled her, but the state of her own feelings which it revealed to her. She could not see without terror the dimness of the image of

Dr. Leroy in her heart, the space and intensity which that of Edmund Barrington had assumed there. The agreeable person, the courteous manners, the good sense and happy gaiety of this young man living amongst the proud, the powerful, the intellectually and politically distinguished, and destined to so immense a fortune, and who had been ever ready to attend, to serve, and to introduce her wherever enjoyment or social honour were to be found, had gained, unperceived by her, a hold on her regard, that only now stood revealed in its fullest proportions. What had made her so supremely happy in this visit—in this family? The love, she said to herself, of every individual in it. Mr. and Mrs. Barrington had treated her with the tenderness of parents. The daughters had received and treated her as one of them; the son, rather haughty as he was generally deemed, had been all devotion—a devotion never relaxing, always

finding some new occasion of affording her pleasure. And Dr. Leroy? She saw with shame and compunction that her correspondence with him had declined. His letters had to her been as frequent as ever, as glowing with affection; but hers—they had certainly become fewer and colder. She had excused herself for not writing oftener, or at greater length, by the constant round of engagements in which she lived, and promised him ample details of what she called her adventures on her return. But were these assurances capable of satisfying the quick sense of a genuine lover? She knew that they had not been so. Dr. Leroy had complained, though in the gentlest and kindest manner, that the gaieties and friends of London seemed to have utterly eclipsed the sober life and friends of the country. Her mother had just now written that she was afraid Millicent had not been very attentive to Dr. Leroy, who seemed out of

spirits, and who confessed that he seldom heard from her.

All her sins rushed over her memory and conscience. She hastened away to her bedroom : opened the drawer in which she kept the letters of her family and of Frank Leroy, and saw to her shame that there were many of his letters that she had scarcely read, many that she had never answered—some, actually with their seals unbroken. She sank down in a chair, and sat long motionless as in a trance. But in that outwardly trance-like state, her mind was in full and fiercest activity. She asked herself whether then such a change had really taken place in her. Whether she was prepared to abandon an ardent lover a noble-spirited man, and to attach herself to a person of but yesterday's acquaintance ? Could she really be so fickle ! She wished to break the spell of such strange enchantment, and seized pen and paper, and wrote a long letter to Dr. Leroy—but on

reading it over, she was terrified to perceive that it was but words, words, words—the old life and love did not exist in it. It was like the dead shell of the chrysalis; the winged Psyche of love had flown—whither? Ah! too well she could follow and find it.

The bell for dinner rang, and she hurried down-stairs to take her part in the conversation as best she might. Every one observed her silence, her absence of mind, her want of interest in what was passing—and asked whether she was unwell, or had received bad news. To plead indisposition would have been to bring immediate attentions of the most perplexing kind upon her. She had no ill-tidings to report, and could only excuse herself by saying that she thought she was a little fatigued. This enabled her to retire early, and she sat down and wrote a letter to her mother, begging to be forgiven for the apparent neglect to herself and Dr. Leroy, but that the bustle of London, and its hurry-

ing stream of engagements she thought had turned her head. Ah! poor thing! it would have been well had this been all, but they had turned something more serious—her heart!

The next day was Sunday, and whatever might be the social licence with which the young Barringtons overleaped the pale of the Society on the week-days, they all duly attended the morning meetings in town. The large family carriage regularly rolled up to the Meeting House gates in Houndsditch, and they descended to an hour and a half's quiet musing of some sort in that still and shady tabernacle. Ah! that stillness! How little it suited the beating heart and tortured bosom of Millicent Heritage. Charles Lamb says, that he once got into a Quaker's meeting, and never went through such a process of spiritual inquisition before. He found himself asking himself more questions in one short hour, than he could have answered in a

year. What, then, must have been the condition of Millicent Heritage? Loving, sensitive, educated in a straight line of honour, purity, and truth—and guilty? Who shall depict the tortures of that age-long hour and a half? She went back to her past life; to its peace, its innocence, her deep enjoyment of existence and of nature; and then she turned a scared eye on the purple cloud and rapturous whirlwind in which she had lately been floating far above the darkened scenes and landscapes of the past. What would her father and mother say—if she proved faithless to her most solemn vows and most sacred engagements? Could she really give up Dr. Leroy for another—honourable, gifted, learned, and amiable as he was? Ay,—but that was no longer the question; did she, could she still love him? The answer from that strange thing, the heart, made a thrill of sickening cold pass through her. There was a spirit in it that mocked her; a chill that

she could not cast out, a fire in another quarter of it, that she could not command. A sense of despair seized her that was more terrible than death, she prayed to die, and had she been alone, could have flung herself on the floor and cried aloud for death.

At this moment arose an aged woman in the gallery opposite to her. She was clad in the simplest garb of grey, and over it a light cloak of grey. She laid down her bonnet of the most rigorously antiquated make and material, and displayed a coarse muslin cap over her grey hair, as destitute of grace or ornament as any human hand could fashion. Millicent knew her well. She was from Ireland, and bore the unambitious name of Grubb.

In a voice clear and solemn she said, "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the

sea. Woe unto the world, because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Therefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee; for it is better to enter into life halt and maimed rather than having two hands, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thy eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire."

In words at first slow and with pauses between, as if the inspiration came but measuredly, she described the soul that is tempted by ambition, by avarice, or by the very affections of its weak nature to sin against itself or others. She drew a picture of the temptation of Judas Iscariot to betray even the Lord of Life, and the agonies of remorse that afterwards seized on him. She described him as hastening to the Sanhedrim,

and flinging down the price of blood in the midst of the priests and scribes, and their taunt of "See thou to that!" As she warmed in her discourse, her language became rapid, loud, impassioned,—her small, slender frame seemed to expand, to rise, as it were, into the air, and all the spirit of the prophet to be upon her. She drew a picture of the horrors of such a soul as, tempted by the passions, pleasures, or even otherwise innocent endearments of life, selling what was sacred for the mere coinage of self-indulgence, and condemning the righteous to injury and woe!

At that word she suddenly stopped. There was a silence as of death. Dropping abruptly from the high-wrought pitch of inspired passion, she went on again in a tone of deep and solemn feeling, saying, "If there be a soul here thus hard beset by a strong temptation of any kind, to betray the innocent, or to sell the pure uprightness of a precious and immortal spirit, let him or *her*"—and she

seemed to pause on the latter word—"pause, and cut off the offending part, even should it be some tender, quivering portion of the heart itself, and preserve unscathed the glorious, eternal heritage of a good conscience!"

A deep sigh seemed to issue from the bosom of the whole united congregation. There was a breathing, as of a sudden relief, and after a short silence the meeting broke up. Many a one asked of his neighbour for whom this could be meant. There was one who could have answered; but she was walking as in a dream. She entered the waiting carriage, shrunk into a corner, only answering, "A most awful sermon!" to a question of what she thought of it. She hastened to her chamber, and there found a relief in a torrent of tears, and in vows to stand firm to her duty, if it cost her her life.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT CAME OF MILLICENT'S VISIT.

For some days Millicent's distress was too obvious to escape the attention of her loving friends. They inquired again if she were ill; if she had received any bad news. She was obliged to lay the blame of her pale face and sad aspect on indisposition, and then had to fight off the doctor, who was eagerly pressed upon her. She said a few days would set her right again she did not doubt; and immediately pleasant drives and cheerful calls on agreeable friends were recommended. The young ladies proposed a drive into the parks, and their brother stayed to accompany them. Millicent had often driven across the

parks, and admired their pleasant greenness amid the vast brick wilderness of London; but she had no idea of what this drive was to be. About four in the afternoon they entered Hyde Park, and found themselves at once in a splendid cavalcade of fine horses, fine carriages, and fine people, which made Millicent exclaim, "What is all this about? Where are all these fashionable people going?"

"They are about what we are about; they are going just where we are going," said the Friends. "These are the aristocracy taking their daily airing before dinner."

As Millicent gazed in astonishment at the trains of handsome equipages, superb horses, superbly liveried servants, and handsome young men and women on magnificent horses, she said, "And this every day! What an amazing scene!"

"Not so amazing," said Edmund; "if you considerth at whilst Parliament is sitting,

not only the wealth of a world's commerce, but that of all the rest of the United Kingdom, is being expended here; that here you see the *élite* of the British aristocracy of rank, affluence, and political influence, assembled. Now you may form some little idea of the riches, the beauty, and taste of England. The world has no such scene besides—not the Prater at Vienna—not even the Bois de Boulogne of Paris." And as they drove, he pointed out to Millicent, men of distinguished rank, ministers, judges, great lawyers, ambassadors of different countries, great Parliamentary orators, and the most noted beauties of the fashionable world.

"Well," said Millicent, "it is worth seeing; but I am glad I form no part of it."

"Why not?" asked Edmund.

"Oh!" said Millicent—"what a butterfly life it seems to me! What a very gay whirligo-round; much finer than that of children at a fair; but still, only a whirligo-

round. I should grow as sick of it as a squirrel must of his ever round-spinning cage. Give me a good brisk canter over a moor, or along the bowery lanes of my own dear country."

"Yes! and why not have them too?" said her friends. "You do not consider that these people are, during the season, cooped up in London—many by severe and unavoidable duties, and this is the only thing they can get at all resembling country exercise. In the autumn they will return, most of them, to enjoy their gallops over moors and along lanes, as much as yourself."

"I am glad of it," said Millicent; "and yet thousands who have no express business in town spend their springs and summers here, and love this Vanity Fair dearly—this seeing and being seen—this rivalry of fine horses, dresses, and equipages. I don't envy them."

"Oh dear no! Nor do they envy you,

Millicent," said her friends. "There speaks the Quaker in you; that might be your mother talking."

"I am glad you think I talk at all like my dear mother," said Millicent; "for if it be anything like her talk it must have some sense in it. But, though I would not like this sort of life myself, I am much obliged by your making me acquainted with it."

The trouble which Millicent had shown on account of the bracelet, and the evident distress, from some cause, which was upon her, made her loving friends apparently desirous to neutralise the effect a little by the sisters bringing her elegant presents—beautifully bound books, and the like. One of them asked her to let her look at her watch; and, taking off the plain black woven band by which it was held, replaced it by a pretty gold chain.

"My dear creature!" exclaimed Millicent, "of what use would such a thing be to me?

I could never wear it. I should have a deputation from the meeting to visit me about it!"

"Never mind that," said her friend; "thou must teach them better. There is no particular sin in gold; it is a gift of God, and ought not to be rejected; and the art which shaped it so beautifully surely deserves encouragement."

"All that I grant," said Millicent; "but only think of wearing a gold chain in a meeting where the plainest ribbon or a bonnet-tie excites remark; where an extra plait in a cap brings down a censure from some zealous woman Friend or other."

"For that very reason," said her companion, "you, who know better, ought to break through this silly narrowness. It is time that Friends gave up their sectarian notions that 'they are the people, and that wisdom must die with them.'"

"Really that is *too* bad for anything!"

exclaimed Millicent, and yet could not help joining in the general merriment.

"Be sure, dear Millicent," said her young friends, "these things do good. It is high time that Friends should see that their real strength lies in the great principles which they hold, and which have already so usefully leavened society at large, and that their little Phariseeisms are of no consequence whatever. Quakerism is like a fine statue in a public place, on which the dust and smoke have fallen. You may wipe off these sullying particles, and you only restore the statue to its true beauty. The greater minds of our society are beginning to see this, and one day there will come a grand reform amongst us."

There were still other scenes to which these "gay young Friends," as they were called, wished to introduce Millicent, and amongst these were the theatre, the opera, and morning and evening concerts. Against

these she made a stout stand. Her parents would greatly disapprove of it, and she would not for the world grieve them. Besides, plays and operas were vain, and often wicked things: they could do her no good, and she did not wish to see them."

"But," said they, "you, Millicent, are a poetess and a lover of knowledge. You ought to see life if you are to understand or describe it."

"But I don't want to describe it," said Millicent.

"Still," added they, "you should know it, though it were only to know it; you need not frequent such scenes again if you do not like them. Don't you know what the Grand Duke of Weimar, the friend of Goethe, the great German poet, says? But you don't read German. He often said to Goethe that he would wish to experience everything. He would like to go into the lower regions even for a few days, to see how they manage

to make their life there tolerable under such momentous disadvantages. He remarked that we are told a great deal about the life above, and which he thought not very attractive, if it consisted almost entirely of psalm-singing and waving of palms; but he fancied that such a very miserable existence as that of the lower world must have called forth the utmost ingenuity of the human or superhuman mind, and that there must be some very curious inventions down there."

"My curiosity," said Millicent, "will never induce me to wish to visit those regions. I am quite willing that the Grand Duke should have the benefit of such a journey all to himself."

But what avails a strong will, and what are good intentions, when the heart has received a treacherous bias. Millicent was every day more drawn by affection towards Edward Barrington, more deeply attached to his kind sisters, who, with all their gaiety, were full

of the truest feminine feelings, and active in the best duties and philanthropies of life. In less than three weeks, which she still spent with them, she had been at the theatre, the opera, at different concerts, and at a *féte champêtre* given in the suburban grounds of a nobleman, where there was a splendid military band, and a concourse of company, including even persons of royal blood; and her own oriental style of beauty, which some ladies said looked more like Arabia or Circassia than England, drew much attention.

Millicent, in spite of her solemn and tearful resolves, had given her heart wholly to her indefatigable admirer, Edmund Barrington, and his sisters rejoiced in the knowledge of it. But Mrs. Barrington, who could not be blind to what was so obviously growing up, was in great trepidation and anxiety. She told both Edmund and her daughters that she understood distinctly from Mrs. Heritage that Millicent was engaged to a

young physician in her own neighbourhood; and could they think it honourable, knowing that, to draw away the young girl's affections whilst under their own roof and care?"

"Dear mother!" said her daughters, "hast thou seen the portrait of this young man? We have, and Oh! such a simple, smooth-faced Simon it is! Can it be right, can it be honourable to allow a young, clever creature like Millicent to engage herself in her years of inexperienced country life, to a person far unworthy of her; and to retain such an engagement after a more extended knowledge of society, to her life-long unhappiness? No, surely it is better that it should come to a speedy end."

But Mrs. Barrington asked them if they were sure that Dr. Leroy was such a mere cipher as they imagined? She understood from Mrs. Heritage, who was a woman capable of judging, that he was not only a

very amiable, but very able and accomplished man."

The daughters had seen a miniature painted by a country artist, in Millicent's possession, and certainly a more smooth-faced, simple, and meaningless portrait never was beheld. It was the picture which they judged of, not the man, whom they had never seen. Mrs. Barrington zealously resumed the matter with her son, but he replied, that if Millicent liked him better than another, he was not going to say to her, Stick to a man that you now find does not fill by his image the extended horizon of your heart and mind. He thought she ought to be left to judge for herself, in such a matter, most of all.

"But, my dear Edmund," said his mother; "canst thou say that thou hast left her to judge for herself? Hast thou not done thy best to persuade her, and to change her feelings in thy favour?"

Edmund smiled. "Ah! dear mother! do we live in such primitive times that we do not venture to pluck a flower because another person likes it too? Are these the days of such disinterested chivalry? Are these days of such self-denying ordinances? I think I could look round in our meeting, and find some very high precedents for such exercise of free will."

Mrs. Barrington was silent, for the truth came very near home, and certain tender reminiscences rose up from long past days, and made her reasonings rather faint.

"But what shall I say to thy father? what—oh what! to our friends at Fair Manor?"

"Leave all that to me," said her son; "nature is always in quiet course of development, and brings things round which are not very easy to the sharpest wits."

The hour of Millicent's return home had come. She had arrived in May, it was now

the glowing middle of July. In those two months she had lived ages. New worlds of life and thought had been opened to her: but those had not made her happier. The time she had spent in London, amid such distinguished and affectionate friends, was an enchanted time, but there lay a heavy cloud on her heart as she turned her mind homewards. There were revelations to make there, and things to be done which made her very soul shrink, as it were, into a nut-shell. Mr. Barrington, who was glad of a trip to Castleborough, and a visit to his old friend and business connection, Mr. Heritage, accompanied her in the mail, and during the few days that he stayed all was outwardly bright. Millicent was enthusiastic in her expressions of the kindness of her friends in town, and the pleasure they had procured her, and Mr. Barrington was equally eloquent in the praises of Millicent, and in his hope of her meeting them again. Then he went; and then the heart

of Millicent sank at what was before her. She must come to an explanation with Dr. Leroy, and the whole truth must burst upon her parents. Dr. Leroy had, of course, ridden over at the first news of Millicent's return, and she had met him with all the kindliness that she could assume. But what assumptions can pass muster with a genuine lover. There had been a great falling off both in the frequency, the volume, and the fervour of Millicent's correspondence with Dr. Leroy. He had his friends in town, and from them he had heard of the great regard in which Millicent was held by the Barringtons, of their constant endeavours to amuse her, of the admiration in which she was held by the gay society into which she had been introduced, and of the assiduous attendance and attentions of Edmund Barrington. So long as Mr. Barrington remained, Millicent managed to stave off the explanation which must inevitably and promptly come,

for Dr. Leroy bore in his pale face and silent manner, the plainest signs of the uneasiness within.

The moment that Mr. Barrington left, Millicent mounted her favourite dark bay mare, May Dew, and with Tom Boddily as groom, rode off to Woodburn Grange. Much love, and many congratulations on her charming visit to London, and welcomes back, met her there; but as soon as she could she withdrew with Ann into her chamber, and laid open the astounding change in her views and feelings. Ann Woodburn sat dumb with astonishment and concern. Millicent flung her arms round her neck, and with floods of tears begged her counsel and help in the dilemma. Counsel! help! What counsel, what help could she give if the heart of her friend had gone from her old love to a new.

Ann at length said, with a most sorrowful expression, "Poor Dr. Leroy! poor, poor

fellow! what will he do? how will he bear it?" And again she sat as if paralyzed.

"But what shall I do, dear Ann Woodburn? What can I do?" said Millicent.

"That is more than I can tell," said Ann. "God alone can direct you in such a crisis. What is to be done! What *will* be the end of it?"

Millicent went on passionately to detail the growth and incidents of this change, and to defend her new friends from the blame which Ann charged them with, as dishonourable and selfish. At length she said, "Dear, dear Millicent, all I can advise is, for you to do nothing hastily. You have been dazzled by the splendours you have been living amongst. Take time for reflection; in the quiet of the country, in the midst of your old associations, a different view of things may again present itself. Poor Dr. Leroy!—so good, so clever! My dear friend, the sudden bursting upon me of this news is like a thunderbolt. I cannot

collect my faculties ; all I can say is, don't hurry, don't hurry, and pray earnestly, incessantly for help and direction from God."

The friends parted with a long and tender embrace, and Millicent rode off, not homewards, but to Bilts' farm, to see whether she could draw a ray of comfort or counsel from Elizabeth Drury. But the same scenes took place there. After the first glad and mutual salutations and embraces, Millicent laid open her trouble to her friend Elizabeth, and with much the same result as with Ann Woodburn. Elizabeth Drury opened her large grey eyes in astonishment, and then said, "Mercy ! What a fatality ! what a perplexity ! My dear Millicent, were there no Dr. Leroy, I should congratulate you with all my heart on such a connection. But—but ! —what in the world is to be done ? Millicent dear, I can only say, with that wise, yet loving Ann Woodburn—take time. I am no Quaker, you know. I have made no vows

against 'the pomps and vanities of this wicked world,' though I suppose somebody did for me one day. I can understand to a certain extent the fascinations of great wealth, great splendour of position, great gaiety and prestige of fashionable life; but let me tell you, I prefer ten thousand times this more simple and quiet existence here in the country. What do we want more than we have? A lovely country, sufficiency of means for enjoying it, friends dear, intelligent, and refined. Ah! I do not think the luxurious and more glittering life of the metropolis or of high aristocratic rank can compare with it. When the attention is drawn every day over such a multitude of objects and persons, where can it settle? how can the heart take root anywhere? No—the heart—the heart, my dear friend, in that lies the fountain of happiness, and a few deep, tender, and lasting attachments are worth more than a million of mere super-

ficial acquaintances. I say, with dear Ann Woodburn—take time: weigh well your decision, dear Millicent. Remember that it may be death, or worse than death, to a most estimable man, and of much sorrow to others. Wait—wait! Here you have the prospect of a happy and useful life; here you are loved and honoured far round; here a great field of beneficent labour awaits you. Oh! to me, how much more delightful than the grander but hurrying, whirling life of busy London! How much more worth seem to me the solid satisfactions of an affluent and intellectual country life, than the pageantry and ornamental glare of a more artificial existence."

Millicent assented with passionate tears to every word of her friend's discourse, but this did not help the real difficulty. Her heart had undergone a revolution, and the stern decision stood unabated before her. In a few more days Dr. Leroy had insisted on

a candid statement of Millicent's feelings towards him; and she had given it, though it cost her a terrible agony. She had no misgivings as to the necessity of this avowal; but the rent that must be made in many friendships, the sorrow which she knew it must bring upon her parents, and the misery which it must inflict on one who had been the friend of her earliest youth, came with a crushing weight upon her.

Dr. Leroy left the house, and returned to Castleborough, but it was with the look of a man who had received an inner death-wound. Pale and silent, he seemed to casual passers as if he had suddenly become actually black. There was the dark shadow of a dreary desolation on his countenance. He made no complaint to any one, not even to his own mother; he made none to the parents of Millicent, but they saw in her pallid, compressed features, in her silent manner, and her eyes, whence she strove in vain to remove

the traces of weeping, that something was going awfully wrong. It was not long before Mrs. Heritage had managed to draw the astounding secret from Millicent's lips, on condition only that she should not write to the Barringtons about it.

What a millstone was that which thus fell on the sober happiness of Fair Manor. Mrs. Heritage, with her high notions of Christian truth and integrity, could scarcely realise such a calamity as the breach of so sacred an engagement with so estimable a man as Dr. Leroy. Earnestly did she entreat her daughter to pause before she made an irrevocable decision. Earnestly, wrestlingly did she lay all this great trouble before God. Scarcely less severe was the blow to Mr. Heritage. He looked at the happiness of his daughter but as connected with her reputation for integrity of purpose, and he deeply lamented the cruel blow given to Dr. Leroy. Both Mr. and Mrs. Heritage wrote affectionate

and tenderly sympathising letters to him, hoping that things might take a better turn. But the condition of Millicent occasioned them not only severe grief, but deep alarm. Though she had, in a mood of desperation, broken the link of attachment with Dr. Leroy, it had brought no peace to her own bosom. She felt the sharpness of the wound which she had given him. She recalled the long season of their youthful friendship, and his many merits and virtues. She saw in the grief of her parents the amazement and blame which would run through the circle of her friends ; but in vain did she endeavour to recall a sense of the love which had flitted to another object. The effect upon her was that of a wasting fire upon her nerves. She had no violent illness, but she was miserable, pale, and sad. The least sudden sound shook her like an electric shock. She was the walking shadow of a withering despondency.

Elizabeth Drury, who was shocked more and more at every fresh sight of her, proposed that they should go together to some cheerful, genial sea-coast; and as she had an aunt living at Ventnor, in the Isle of Wight, she suggested to Mr. and Mrs. Heritage that they should go there for a while. To this they eagerly agreed; and the two young ladies, with Tom Boddily as groom, set out for the south without delay. As for Millicent, she would have gone to the north or south Pole, or to any place, if she could have hoped to run away from her own feelings and reflections.

A few days saw them located on the cliffs of Ventnor, overlooking the ship-studded sea, and amid the lively stir of gay summer visitors. Elizabeth Drury put forth all her powers of vivacity and entertainment. She showed her friend about, strolled with her along the margin of the sounding, dashing waves, read to her, and engaged horses on

which to range the coast and the hills in every direction, from Sandown to Blackgang Chine, from St. Laurence's minikin church to Appuldercombe, Godshill, or the ruins of Carisbrook. They had a handsome villa to themselves standing in a pleasant shrubbery, overlooking the town and sea, and out of the way of the general traffic. They could be in a crush or a solitude at pleasure. Under the guidance of Elizabeth Drury, and cheered by her buoyant spirit, which loved to look on the bright side of things as much as possible, and with her mind full of knowledge and amusing anecdote, Millicent began to breathe more freely, and to recover strength of frame, if not much greater peace of mind. There were letters frequently from London, the greater part of which she gave Elizabeth to read. They came from the Misses Barrington, regretting that her health was not strong, and saying, that their brother would be down to see her in a few days, and if she stayed

much longer, they should come down in a flock to see whether they could not help nature to recover her spring. Millicent was evidently greatly excited, and that pleasurably, by the prospect of seeing Edmund Barrington, and Elizabeth Drury was curious to see the man who had been able to supplant Dr. Leroy. But they were destined to receive another visit before that of Edmund Barrington. Elizabeth had proposed the very next day to take a ride through Niton, and up to the tower of St. Catherine. They went alone. Elizabeth knew the way, and like a most experienced groom opened gates in ascending the fields from Niton to the top of the hill where the tower stands. They had reached the summit of the hill, and taken a delighted survey of the vast prospect over sea and land which it gave; the rocks along the winding coast, over which the milk-white waves were lashing; St. Catherine's lighthouse below; the sweep of shore on

towards Alum Bay and Freshwater, and the tamer interior of the island. Tying their horses to the gate leading into the field in which the tower stands, they first examined that empty and desolate object, which is familiar to the mariner so many leagues at sea. They then sat down on the mossy turf amid the scattered furze bushes, and enjoyed the scent of the native sward and the simple wild-flowers, and the peaceful scene of nature spread beneath their eye ; the green corn waving on the slopes, the white flocks grazing silently on the down-like pastures. All at once they heard the hollow tramp of an approaching horse on the hill behind them. They sprang up, and observed a gentleman riding towards them. "Mr. Barrington! it must be Mr. Barrington!" exclaimed Elizabeth. "No! as I live, it is Dr. Leroy!"

She saw that Millicent had already turned deadly pale, and trembled violently. "What shall I do?" she said. "What will become

of me ?" Elizabeth could only say hurriedly, "Do and say nothing which can unncessarily hurt his mind. Poor fellow, he is wretched enough. May God Almighty aid and guide you both."

Dr. Leroy had tied his horse to a rail not far from the others, and was already coming agitatedly towards them. He put out his hand, and accosted them with a face full of misery, and which could not assume even a melancholy smile.

"I am an intruder, ladies," he said ; "that is my misfortune ; but excuse me for a few minutes ; I will not distress you long ; but I must, as a last favour, request of Millicent a few words to ourselves. They shall be but few." His lips quivered, his voice faltered. Millicent looked imploringly to Miss Drury.

"Oh, *go*, dear Millicent !" she said ; "Dr. Leroy's request, under the circumstances, is most reasonable. You are old, and, I trust,

still dear friends ; give him a kind hearing, give him what comfort you can."

Millicent moved away silently, in a direction down the hill, beyond the tower, and her once-beloved suitor moved silently by her side. Elizabeth Drury threw herself again on the warm summer turf, hid her face in her hands, and prayed, prayed, prayed, as if she would call back some dear one from the dead, or would conquer from the All-ruling Mind some repeal of fate. When she looked up, she saw the unhappy pair standing quite out of hearing. Dr. Leroy was speaking very earnestly, Millicent as earnestly looking on the ground, and switching the grass with her riding-whip. Now she replied as earnestly ; now they moved away a little, now they stood again face to face. She saw Millicent weeping violently ; saw Dr. Leroy take her hand and kiss it passionately, and again they stood as if silent and in perplexity. Though Dr. Leroy said that his words should be few, the

interview drew on, and became long. He himself seemed to grow warm and eloquent, Millicent to content herself with some significant shakes of the head.

"I wonder," said Elizabeth to herself, "though miracles, they say, have ceased, whether a little one might not be wrought for the happiness of these good young people. Oh! what misery has that London visit perpetrated on a whole circle of good creatures; and, yet, as far as I can see, everybody might be just as happy as ever—if they could only think so. There is a fine, frank, clever, and good young fellow; well, really, I could like him myself, if I did not like somebody better, and that silly girl has sent him to the right about for a London money-bag. Really, we women are very silly with all our sharpness. Here they come! Good gracious! It is no good. They look like ghosts!"

The quondam lovers really did approach looking most ominously. A blight seemed to

have passed over them both. Poor Frank Leroy looked blacker in his misery than ever ; Millicent looked very little better.

"Good-bye, dear Miss Drury," said Dr. Leroy, offering his hand. I must hasten away."

"No," said Elizabeth, "you must not go ; you must stay, at least, and dine with us. I want to introduce you to my aunt. I want some talk with you myself." She continued to retain his hand affectionately.

"I cannot do it, dear friend," said Dr. Leroy, firmly, but with strong emotion. "Good-bye—Good-bye!"

He cast a look at Millicent expressive of a thousand things, and hasting to the gate, mounted his horse and galloped away. The two young women stood in silence, watching him until he disappeared behind the old martello tower standing in that direction, and below the shoulder of the hill. Millicent then threw herself on the turf, and wept

violently. In vain Elizabeth sat down by her, clasped her in her arms, and endeavoured to console her. She wept long and bitterly.

"My dear Millicent," at length Elizabeth said, "if you like Dr. Leroy so much—if your parting from him costs you so much—why don't you make it up with him? Oh! pray do look well into your heart, and see who really has the most of it. Is not this London affair a mere temporary illusion? Is not the old love really at the bottom yet?"

"No! no!" said Millicent, "it is not that; but it is because I am born to make people miserable. Didst thou ever see such misery as in poor Frank's face? And now he is determined to quit his home, his practice, his mother, who doats on him, and go to India. Think—think! what grief I have occasioned to him—to his mother—to my own dear parents——"

"And to yourself, dear Millicent," added

Miss Drury. "They may say that the days of witchcraft are over if they will, but," she said, starting up, "I should like—nay, I *must* see Dr. Leroy before he leaves Ventnor. He will not really sacrifice his fine practice, and ruin everything, by some rash act. Come, come, let us go!"

She hurried Millicent away; they mounted their horses by the aid of the gate, and rode rapidly down hill, and to Ventnor. As they rang at their gate, Tom Boddily appeared promptly.

"Tom!" said Miss Drury, "have you seen Dr. Leroy?"

"Yes, ma'am; I let him have the horse I ride, and told him where to find you."

"And where is he now? Run—tell him I must see him!"

Tom shook his head. "He's gone, ma'am—gone by the three o'clock coach; he just caught it as it started."

Elizabeth walked into the house in silence.

"He is gone!" she repeated. "It is too late! Heaven help us."

"Oh, let us go too!" said Millicent; "I am wretched here—I am on thorns; but where shall I be at peace?" and she sat down, and looked the victim of despair.

"Yes—yes!" said Elizabeth, "we will go. We may still find Dr. Leroy at Castleborough!" She rushed out, and gave Tom Boddily orders to make ready for an instant start, to order a carriage and post-horses for Ryde, whilst she ran and intrusted her aunt with all matters of payment for the house for their short term. Tom seemed to disappear as on wings.

A single hour saw them on their way to Ryde. In those times, however, there were not the numerous steam-packets crossing. There was no railway to receive them at Portsmouth. With all possible speed, however, they continued their journey, and on the third day reached Fair Manor, only to

learn that Dr. Leroy had sailed from London in an Indiaman, in which he had taken the office of surgeon for the voyage the day after he left the Isle of Wight.

All Castleborough was full of wonder and speculation over this, to it, strange event. Some desperate cause, every one felt, must have produced such a catastrophe. Dr. Leroy was so noted for the calmness and equanimity of his disposition. At Fair Manor a profound sorrow reigned, and a deep and brooding silence lay over it. Sylvanus Crook opened the gates for the fly bringing the two young ladies from Castleborough, in silence. Sukey Priddo, when she came to the door, looked as if she had seen an apparition, and ran to tell Mrs. Heritage. Mrs. Heritage came hastily from her room. There were signs of much weeping on her fair, but solemn, and now pale face. She clasped her daughter, who sunk into her arms in tears, and without a word, and carried her, as it were, into

the sitting room, and thence into a small private room beyond. Elizabeth Drury left mother and daughter some time to themselves, and then, gently knocking at the door, said she would go on home, and come to inquire after Millicent in the morning. Mrs. Heritage seized Elizabeth almost convulsively, and kissed her passionately again and again, and then turned and sat down by her daughter. And what a sight was it of that lately so happy daughter! She sat motionless, pale as a corpse, and with a face of such intense wretchedness as the young usually glad spirits of Elizabeth had formed no conception of. She fell on her knees before the unhappy girl, clasped her fondly, and looking into her ghostlike face with streaming eyes, said, "Dearest Millicent! don't! don't be so cast down! Things may be better yet. They may!—they will!—they must! God will not afflict us all so cruelly."

Millicent kissed her friend gratefully, and said, with a wondering look, "But how can that be?—But I am very faint; I will go to bed."

Elizabeth and Mrs. Heritage assisted her up-stairs. The servants, as they passed through the hall, stood aghast and in tears. When Elizabeth had seen Millicent in bed, and again promised to return early in the morning, she embraced her affectionately, and, kissing Mrs. Heritage, hastened down-stairs and away home. There she found the departure of Dr. Leroy the absorbing subject. Her father commented very severely on Miss Heritage for jilting him, as he bluntly called it, for a richer man in London. That was his plain version of the story. That she found was the universal opinion amongst their mutual acquaintance. The true cause of Dr. Leroy's departure, her mother said, had oozed out to the public, which was greatly excited by this sudden abandonment of his practice by a

young man so greatly honoured and esteemed. The blame of Miss Heritage was universal and intense. "She so wealthy," they said, "to let wealth and worldly distinction obliterate the feelings and the friendship of years."

The shadows that Mrs. Heritage had foreseen in the hayfield, had thus fallen on her own house and heart in an Egyptian density, wherever else they might yet extend themselves. No hayfield fête had been held since that memorable day; and causes more closely touching the Woodburns than the darkness lying upon Fair Manor seemed to herald a long cessation of such halcyon times.

CHAPTER VII.

THORSBY'S FALL AND CONVERSION.

THE early married days of Letty Woodburn seemed perfect in their felicity. Often she used to drive over in the handsome open carriage which Thorsby kept chiefly for her use, and whenever she came it was with all the flush of happy life and gaiety about her. She seemed to like her town life, and the new circle of friends that her marriage had introduced her to, yet she always appeared to inhale a fresh draught of joy as she sat in the old rooms, rambled round the old garden, and saw the accustomed objects and people about her as formerly. "Oh!" she would say, "how charming are these dear old scenes —how glad am I that I can so readily come

back to them!" She and Thorsby generally spent their Sundays there, and he was ever in the best of spirits, and even Betty Trapps had somewhat relented towards him. It was observed that he scarcely ever had a jibe at Methodists, evidently out of care not to hurt Betty's feelings, though, as he expressed it, he often trod on her corns by laughing at her friends, Sylvanus Crook and David Qualm. He had bought somewhere, and brought one day, a highly coloured engraving, all bright blue, red, and yellow, of Shon-ap-Morgan-ap-Shenkin-ap-Gwillim, a shentleman of Wales—as the inscription under it expressed it—going to take possession of his father's estate, riding on a goat. This he said he was going to present to Howell Crusoe, the village schoolmaster, as a pleasing memento of his native country. All the Woodburn family begged of him not to do it, saying it would hurt the worthy schoolmaster's feelings, and Betty Trapps said she saw

that Mr. Thorsby had some of th' owd aggravating spirit in him. But Thorsby would take it to Crusoe : and to the astonishment of all the Woodburns the schoolmaster accepted it, and hung it up in his house, as a pleasant joke of Mister Thorsby's. He seemed to think it an honour to have so much notice from him. He presented Thorsby with the little book, already mentioned, that he had printed in Castleborough, of all things and subjects—on etiquette ! It was meant for the help of country schoolmasters like himself in forming the manners of village children. It was founded on his practice, and certainly was a curiosity in its way. Copies of it, I believe, are yet to be procured in the midland counties. Thorsby was convulsed with laughter at its rules, and read them with infinite gusto, not only at the Grange, but among his friends in Castleborough.

Besides the fun Thorsby found in Howell

Crusoe's "Book of Etiquette," he often brought amusing anecdotes from Fair Manor, where he and Letty frequently took tea. Sylvanus, he said, told him seriously that he was very much concerned to find an utter want of conscience in dogs. They are called, he said, very faithful and affectionate animals, but it was, he added, a lamentable fact, that, like too many of their masters, they had no conscience whatever; they were really nothing but time-servers. This he discovered by watching a number of puppies that he had been training. He had tutored them to avoid going on the garden beds, and they knew their duty so well, that as long as any one was in sight they never set a foot on the beds. Yet somehow he observed that there were prints of their feet all over the newly-dug ground. How could this be? He resolved to watch. He walked about the garden with these young dogs, now half grown. Not one ever offered to wander from the walks, but

no sooner did he enter his house, and look cautiously out of the window, than he saw them all deliberately walk on to the beds and behave very badly there. A very slight rap at the window, and they all ran off, and looked very much taken in. Yet, time after time, as he tried the experiment, he found them still ready to run on the beds whenever they thought nobody saw them. "They know their duty," said Sylvanus, "as well as I do—but the fact is, they have no conscience."

Sylvanus, Thorsby said, sincerely believed that spirits appeared sometimes, and the reason he gave for it was, that it is said in the Scriptures that the souls of the righteous shall see the fruits of their labours and be satisfied, and from the same rule, he expected, he said, that the wicked would be sent back to see the fruits of *their* labours, their avarice, their spending their lives in folly, their abuses of their power; and that this was part of

their torment. He thought it must be a very racking thing for miserly men to see their heirs wasting their gold in folly and sin.

He related with great glee the dilemma into which such a grave Friend and acute man of business as Mr. Heritage had fallen. A lady of the Society, a woman of fortune, living some miles out of town, had come under the dealings of the meeting for her infringements of its practices, in dressing gaily, and having much free and easy intercourse with the aristocratic families around her. As she did not reform after repeated official visits and admonitions, even committing the enormity of going to the theatre, she was formally disowned—that is, excommunicated. In drawing up the minute of disownment, the Friends had unadvisedly worded the cause of disownment as for "disorderly walking." This imputation on a lady, Mrs. Jerram noticeably resented, and as Mr. Heritage was the clerk of the meeting, she

commenced an action against him at law for defamation. The trial, which took place in Castleborough, went in her favour, and brought her heavy damages. The damages, of course, were borne by the Society, but Mr. Heritage was so much annoyed at being thus made so prominent in the case against a lady, and his own cousin, too, that he resigned the office of clerk, lest he might fall into other such snares. Mrs. Jerram begged her cousin Heritage not to think for a moment that she bore the least ill-will to him personally on account of this offensive document; she excused him on account of his only discharging his official duty. To show her perfect freedom from resentment, but not, perhaps, without a little triumph on the occasion, she often drove over to Fair Manor, and made herself as agreeable as possible. "But," said Sylvanus, "thou canst imagine that these visits were not quite so agreeable to my master. People don't like, the best of them, to be publicly

beaten, and ridiculed, as they are in such cases."

"Well," said Thorsby, "but you Friends should be more regenerate and forgiving than all that."

"True," replied Sylvanus, "it would be better, but it is difficult to purge the old Adam quite out of us. I fear that there may be a little of the old Adam in myself, but I try to keep him down, and I trust he will not be permitted to obtain undue influence. I earnestly desire to be led and guided right."

"Ah, don't trust too much to that leading and guiding you talk so much about," said Thorsby; "for two of your friends came to my house awhile ago, saying they were moved to come and speak to me as a wild young man, and these were no other than your William Fairfax and David Qualm; and, would you believe it? in going out they took a wrong door, and Fairfax fell down my low kitchen stairs and hurt himself confoundedly.

Mind, Sylvanus, that you are better led and guided than that."

"Thou likes a jest, friend Thorsby ; but I was going to tell thee the clever way my master got rid of Mary Jerram's visits."

"Ah, by all means," said Thorsby.

"Well, thou sees," continued Sylvanus, "Mary Jerram drove up one day, ordered her horses to be taken out, and laid herself out for a long day of it. She stayed all morning ; she stayed dinner. The master came home, and, notwithstanding, she stayed tea. She sat and talked, and talked, and particularly directed her discourse to master. At length, as it was getting late, master said to her, 'Mary, although thou hast left Friends, I suppose thou still remembers something of Scripture.'

"'To be sure,' replied Mary Jerram. 'Remember Scripture! What do you mean ? I am not so disorderly in my walk as to forget that.'

"'Then,' said master, 'thou knowest that the Scriptures say, "If thine enemy hunger, give him meat, if he thirst give him drink;" but I don't think it says anything about lodgings.'

"Thou shouldst have seen the effect of that," said Sylvanus, highly delighted. Since then Mary Jerram has not found her way to Fair Manor again."

Thorsby was never without some jocose talk of this kind at his visits to the Grange. But time rolled on, and there were rumours that the charge of being a wild young man, which the Friends had made against him, was not entirely without foundation. His old jovial companions had drawn him again too much into their society and convivialities. Letty made no complaints on this head, though as time went on her own family thought they saw occasionally a more careful expression on her countenance. Nothing, however, could exceed the affectionate terms

on which they seemed to be ; nothing could betoken more love and admiration than Thorsby's manner to his wife. There appeared no reserve, no concealment between them, and the Woodburns thought there could be no serious cause of complaint betwixt two so obviously happy. But time still rolled on, and in due course a little son was born. With what pride Letty on her next visit to the Grange showed the newest Woodburn to the grandfather,—mother and sister and George had already taken their view of the miniature youth in Castleborough. With what pride she told her father that she was charmed with the opportunity of giving the name of Leonard—Leonard Woodburn Thorsby—to a fresh claimant of the honours and virtues of the house! Thorsby was himself no less proud of the young aspirant to manhood. It was, according to him, the finest, the largest, the cleverest child of its age that he had ever seen ; but, in fact, before

he had never paid much attention to very young children, but seemed to think them something very like fat caterpillars, with apple-dumpling faces.

But was it the joy and pride of his heart that often sent him out in an evening amongst his jolly companions, and sent him home late, sometimes not very good-tempered? True it was that though Thorsby was one of the best of husbands, tender, kind, anxious, solicitous that his wife should have everything to make her happy, yet his ways of making himself happy caused, by degrees, serious inroads into Letty's happiness. Often he not only came home late, but in a condition that he called prime and gay as a lord, but which created very serious fears in his wife's mind. When he was in a less lordlike mood she continued to intreat him to stay with her and read to her at her needlework, or to go and see some of his more domestic friends. What must become of her, she asked, if he contracted

an unconquerable habit of taking too much wine?

"Too much wine!" he would reply. "What are you talking about, my dear child? Too much wine! Why, I tell you, we are all as sober as judges. It is not wine, it is only a little hilarity that we like at the club. When a man has been fagging all day in the counting-house, why, dear me, one must have a little talk and laughter to brighten one up. But never do you fear. I know what I am about. I am not going to make an ass of myself."

Letty thought that he used to find her society refreshing and enlivening once. "And so I do now," he would say; "but one cannot always be tied to one's wife's apron-strings. But I know what it is, Letty: it is these old fogies and Quakers that you have got acquainted with; they make you think all mirth is a sin, and they go about saying I am a wild young man. That's it, Letty dear,

that's it. Now I am not going to be a wild young man; in fact, I think I am getting rather old and serious; but I'll 'wild-young-man' those frouzy Quakers—mark me, if I don't."

With these ideas rankling in his mind, Thorsby one day riding from Woodburn where his wife was staying a few days, saw coming on the road towards him Mr. Jasper Heritage, a tall man, on his tall horse, and little squabby David Qualm on his stout and squably Welsh pony. Thorsby well knew that all Welsh ponies are, more or less, skittish, and that Taffy, Qualm's pony, was excessively so. As the two Friends drew near, therefore, Thorsby took off his hat as if in compliment to them. The moment he lifted it from his head Mr. Heritage shouted, "Keep on thy hat, Henry Thorsby! keep on thy hat!" But Thorsby not only did not put it on again, but he gave it a great flourish as if in extreme politeness; and, it was the

work of a moment,—David Qualm's pony started sideways to the farther side of the road, and left him lying on his back in the middle of it.

Thorsby, who was now afraid, seeing the heavy little man lying motionless, that he might have done more mischief than he intended, sprang from his horse, and ran to lift up the man of silence. But as he nearly reached him, David found the use of his limbs and his tongue, and raising himself on one elbow, his three-cornered hat and brown wig having deserted him; with bare head and wild staring eyes, he swung his one arm furiously, and cried like a maniac,—"Avaunt! son of Belial! Avaunt! Touch me not, man of sin!"

Mr. Heritage, who had also descended from his horse, gently pushed Thorsby away, saying, "Let alone! Take thyself away, Henry Thorsby. This is what I could not have expected of thee."

Thorsby would still have assisted to lift up and wipe the dust from David Qualm, but Mr. Heritage would not let him, but carefully raised his old friend and relative, and began to beat the dust from his coat. Thorsby muttered some sort of an apology—something about his not meaning any harm—but David cast a lion's glance at him, and said, "Thou liest, man! Thou liest! Thou meant it, and nothing less."

Thorsby, who did not think David was much hurt, mounted and rode rapidly off. When he was out of hearing, he gave vent to an uproarious laughter, and said, "A wild young man, indeed! Not so wild but he can keep his seat better than some people." He was so elated with his exploit that he that evening told the story with much humour and some embellishment at the club, to the exquisite delight of his friends, and the next day it was all over the town. Amongst the lighter and more giddy of the population it was

thought a very clever paying-off of the censorious Friend; amongst the older and more thinking people it was regarded in a very different light, and such a dangerous trick played off on a very quiet and inoffensive man, by no means told in favour of Thorsby. The serious manner in which Mr. Heritage spoke of it amongst his friends made a deep impression, and it was regarded as a very impolitic act in Thorsby, who, though his wife stood so well with the wealthy banker, might, in times of commercial depression, find it much to his inconvenience to have sunk in his esteem.

Many things were spoken out on this occasion which had evidently lain for some time in people's minds. Wonder was expressed at the growing dissipation of Thorsby. Of his notoriously riotous and bacchanalian evenings with some of the richest but most immoral young men of the place. Some people wondered that his wife did not appear to see

it; more uttered words of pity for her. Others said "What a fool that man is, with such a wife, with a splendid business, with a circle of acquaintances of the very first class in the town and neighbourhood, and to be running such a course. But it was only the course his father ran, and which made it a short one for him."

The news flew to Woodburn. Sukey Priddo told it that evening on the way from the class-meeting to Betty Trapps, and Betty told it right out to Letty. As she waited on the family at supper, she said, "Well, Mr. Thorsby is a fine playful boy yet, is not he?"

"Is what?" said Letty, eagerly.

"A fine, frocksome boy," said Betty.

"What do you mean, Betty?" added Letty, alarmed.

"I mean only that he has whisked his hat over his head, and made Mr. Qualm's pony send *him* over his head."

"Are you dreaming?" said Mr. Woodburn, somewhat angrily.

"No, sir, I am not dreaming, what I say I say; and there lies poor Mr. Qualm in bed, all shaked to a mummy, and the doctor's bled him and said it is a bad case."

All called on Betty to explain how it took place, and Letty was greatly agitated.

"Oh!" said George, "I see how it is. Harry has taken off his hat to the Friends as they passed, and that scamp of a pony has shied. But he cannot have hurt the old man; falling from that little brute is only like falling from a chair."

"What does a sober man like that ride such a skittish thing for?" asked Mr. Woodburn.

"Because," said George, "I was going to say, he is an old fool; but the fact is people always do ride animals like themselves."

"What! Do you think a man like a horse?" exclaimed Ann.

"To a certain degree," said George, "a little podgy man like David Qualm is sure to select a little podgy horse, a tall slim fellow fancies only a tall slim horse, and so on. It is the same with sticks; men always carry sticks very like themselves, slender or stout, clean or knotty and gnarled: and dogs too, have always a certain resemblance to their masters. And wives—people wonder that husbands and wives are often so alike. It is because men see a likeness to themselves in a woman, and that delights them. They fall in love with their own dear selves in falling in love with a woman. But enough; you can discuss this bit of philosophy while I run up and see how poor old David really is."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, George!" said Letty, as George took down his hat and disappeared. In a very short time he returned, and said—

"I've seen Qualm. He has not much

amiss with him, but he is very angry with Harry, who, however, only seems to have taken off his hat to compliment the gentlemen as they passed. True, David says they cried out to him to keep his hat on, but the fact was, the hat was off when they cried out. You might as well tell a man not to shoot when he has already pulled the trigger."

"I don't see, then," said Letty, "that Harry was really to blame; it was only his courtesy."

"Of course not," said George; and Letty, much relieved, went off with the other ladies to bed.

When she was gone, George said to his father, "I would not make Letty anxious, or she would be tormenting herself all night, but I don't at all like this doing of Thorsby's. It was clearly a designed thing of his, from what I hear. I know he has a pique against David Qualm; and, in fact, I am very

anxious about Thorsby. I hear in Castleborough continually of his wild goings-on with that scapegrace set of young fellows that I hoped he had long ago cut."

"I have heard the same," said Mr. Woodburn, "and have spoken more than once to Thorsby on the subject, and he has always promised to reform; but my opinion is that he is just as weak as a bulrush. He can't help himself. It is a very serious affair."

"Well," said George, "there always was an excitable nature in Thorsby. He has very quick feelings for good, and if not for evil, at least for pleasure, and what he calls jollity. I had hoped that Letty would have been able to keep him more at home, but he always says he must have a little innocent larking, he should go daft without it."

"He will go daft with it," said Mr. Woodburn, "if he does not mind."

Leonard Woodburn had had other causes of annoyance of late to try his temper, of

which anon, and he felt very keenly the conduct of Thorsby towards his daughter.

"I have long thought," he said "that Letty is far from happy. I see a gravity about her, a shade over her countenance sometimes, that I never saw before her marriage."

"Yes, but remember, dear father, that she is now a wife and a mother; we cannot expect people to remain always the lightsome beings of their boy or girlhood."

"I expect nothing of the sort," said Mr. Woodburn, rather tartly; "but I did expect that this fellow would not be such a fool. It is a confounded bad job, George, and makes me very cross and very miserable. Good-night." And Mr. Woodburn withdrew to bed.

It was soon found that great censure was cast on Thorsby for his conduct in this affair, and the knowledge of it seemed to anger him, and to drive him into further excesses. For

the first time he turned almost savagely on Letty, when, on her return home, she expressed regret at what had happened.

"An old fool," he said; "he should ride a safe horse, and not such a will-o'-the-wisp as that Welsh pony, and then no harm could happen to him."

"But you knew, dear Harry, what the pony was," said Letty. "I wish you had not done it. But s it is done, do, pray, call on Mr. Qualm and apologize to him: a soft word, you know, turneth away wrath. And call on Mr. Heritage and express your regret. We were on such good terms with them all, and they are such worthy people."

"Do you think me such a sneak, Letty?" said Thorsby, taking up his hat to go out to business. "Don't you believe it."

Letty knew a great deal more of Thorsby's life than had yet reached Woodburn, but she had buried it and the sorrow of it in her heart, and would not breathe a syllable of it

except to God, which she did with most fervent prayers and scalding tears. Many a report had come to her from a most faithful quarter, and that was Thomas Barnsdale, the manager of Thorsby's business, a man who regarded the concern and the reputation of his employer as his own. He was a Methodist in religion, and a great reader of books of general literature of a solid kind. He had grown up from a boy in the concern, and was ever at his post, and ever regardless of his own labour to conduct it to advantage. The unsteady life of Thorsby was all brought to his knowledge, and he had not hesitated to speak seriously to him and repeatedly, even at the risk of dismissal. He asked him earnestly to recollect the shortened life and injured name and fortunes of his father ; and to act as he ought to do with such favour as God had showered on him in such a wife, and in such friends all round. Thorsby had taken these sermons, as he called them, not

amiss, but he had not altered. Every day Mr. Barnsdale heard of some wild exploit of Thorsby and his comrades—practical jokes of the most daring and expensive kind. One of these they had carried on at the expense of a young surgeon of the town, whose vanity they had excited by a letter written to him as from a lady of fortune at Bristol, who had seen him at Castleborough, and fallen deeply in love with him. A long correspondence had been kept up between the young man and the imagined lady, the letters purporting to be from her having been duly posted, and the young surgeon's received by an accomplice at Bristol. At length the *dénouément* was to take place. The lady was to meet him at Cheltenham; relays of horses were engaged for him at the lady's cost all the way from Castleborough to Cheltenham, where he was to proceed in a private carriage, and there the marriage was to take place by special licence. All was found by

the young man arranged as stated, and away he posted free-cost to Cheltenham, only to find at the appointed rendezvous a letter from the improvised lady, saying she had changed her mind.

This could not have been carried out except at an expense which none but very foolish and very mischievous fellows would have incurred, but the delight which it occasioned them, and the hints which they from time to time gave to the hoaxed inamorato, that they knew of the affair, seemed ample satisfaction to their perverted minds.

Time rolled on. Thorsby was looked very coldly on at Woodburn Grange, at Fair Manor, and by many leading and right-thinking people in Castleborough. Thomas Barnsdale felt it his duty to make Letty acquainted with the downward course of her husband, that it might not come in a more sudden and unexpected manner upon her. He could now counsel with her, and work

with her in attempts to check this career, and it was a comfort to Letty to have such a faithful and reliable friend to open her distressed mind to.

Providence at length sent one of those *contretemps* which, if properly weighed, lead to retracement. Thorsby, attending the hunt, was thrown from his horse, and the shock that he received, owing probably to the state of his system from intemperance, produced pleurisy, and brought him to the brink of death. The physicians looked very gloomily on the case, and Thorsby, with that quick sensitiveness of feeling natural to him, fell into the greatest condition of terror and despair. He made the most touching and agonised confessions to his wife of his unworthiness of her, of his folly and wickedness. Poor Letty only too freely forgave him, and cheered him with hopes of life yet, or of forgiveness by an ever good God, if he was taken away. Thorsby begged that she would

send for Mrs. Heritage that she might pray for him, and that through her he might send his avowal of deep contrition to Mr. Heritage and David Qualm. Letty at once sent the carriage for Mrs. Heritage, and that ever-ready minister of love was speedily at his bed-side.

The repeated conversations and prayers of this good woman produced in Thorsby a sense of remorse and kind of burning desire to live and enact a new and nobler life, which were very edifying. In a few days the doctors pronounced the crisis past, and Thorsby, in a calmer state, was insatiable of the readings in the New Testament which Letty afforded him. He recovered ; but the effect of this serious danger and alarm remained. A new phase of character now revealed itself in him. He continued extremely burdened in spirit, and zealously religious. He abandoned his club associates, and accompanied his wife and Thomas

Barnsdale to the meetings. But he could not satisfy himself with merely attending religious services, he felt himself compelled to stand forth and testify to the mercy of God in thus again raising him up. Town and neighbourhood were one day astonished beyond measure by seeing large placards posted all over Castleborough and the neighbouring villages that Mr. Henry Thorsby was going to preach at the Methodist Tabernacle.

We may imagine the laughter, the jibes and scoffs which ran amongst his old associates and the profaner portion of the population at this announcement. Thorsby turned preacher! Saul amongst the prophets! Balaam's ass about to open its mouth; were but a few of the witticisms afloat. All his old associates were resolved to go and hear Saint Harry's conventicle whinings, which they prophesied would last as many nights as days. At Woodburn, the state of mind

on the hearing of this news it would be difficult to analyse. Astonishment was great, but not the uppermost feeling. As Church-people, there was a touch of shame, of disgust, of mortification at Thorsby exhibiting himself as an amateur preacher of dissent. Something of all these, and something more. Would it last? David Qualm, when he heard of it, and who, by the by, was all right again, and still riding that ticklish pony, said, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." After that great effort of oracular speech, he closed his mouth again and was silent for a week.

But David Qualm's utterance had an uneasy echo in the minds of many, and the inmates of Woodburn Grange were amongst them. Letty, however, said, "Anything, anything, rather than that old life of his," and her family, therefore, waited for what time should bring forth. On the Sunday named, there was a general stream of life

flowing towards the tabernacle. Every possible atom of space in it was crowded. Many of the leading people of the place were seen amongst the expectant concourse. Letty herself was not there. The trial to her nerves was too severe.

The regular minister opened the service by prayer and a hymn, and then Thorsby ascended the pulpit, opened his Bible, and took his text from the Psalms—"Thou hast brought me up from the gates of hell." The silence was profound. He then began by reference to his past life and his late illness. There was no nervousness, no hesitation about him, as in one unaccustomed to such a public display. He said, doubtless much wit and many pleasant sarcasms had been and would be expended over the change which had taken place in him. He would only say, let those thus disposed only come into the crisis through which he had passed, and they would then hear what he had to say. Now he boldly came

forth to return thanks to God for his mercy to him, and devote his life to the service of Christ, the friend of sinners. He then drew a picture of his past condition ; of the valley of the shadow of death, of the terrors of Almighty judgment through which he had passed, and appealed to his hearers to follow his example, and think nothing of scorn, or ridicule, or persecution for the advocacy of the most momentous interests of the human race. As he proceeded he warmed into a tone of eloquence which surprised every one ; and before he had done, few were the eyes that were not drowned in tears.

As the vast congregation streamed away from the chapel, many of the old members of it said they had heard many wonderful sermons in that chapel from great preachers, but nothing like that. Many said they had no idea that Thorsby had so much in him ; and all admitted that at all events he

had discovered a new and amazing talent in himself, and would, if he held on, be truly a burning and a shining light. The ascent of such a brilliant meteor into the religious horizon of Methodism produced immediately numerous calls to visit other towns—Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds, &c. &c.,—and everywhere the same enthusiasm was excited by Thorsby's addresses. He might have gone from town to town on a triumphal round of religious service; much time he was, in a measure, obliged to devote to such engagements, and well was it for him that he had a man like Thomas Barnsdale to attend to his business affairs. For some months Thorsby continued to astonish and electrify the public by his impassioned discourses. Fair Manor expressed a quiet hope that it would continue. Woodburn Grange was in a condition of mind fit subject for metaphysical plumblines to explore, half astonished and half acquiescent in the strange phenomenon. Letty,

with tears and smiles, when there, continued to say, "Anything, anything, so that Harry continues as steady and kind as now."

Betty Trapps alone expressed no enthusiasm, and avowed no faith in this grand metamorphosis. She had heard Mr. Thorsby, she said, at Hillmartin Chapel. It was very fine what he said, but then she knew that he awlis could talk finely, even when he made so many "skits" on the Methodists. For her part she looked on this as a judgment on him for his fleering at good people so often. She and Sukey Priddo had seen something that satisfied them.

"What have you seen, Betty?" asked Mrs. Woodburn. Betty didn't seem in a hurry to answer; but when urged by all the family she said,

"Well, if you must know, we saw the shadder of th' Owd Youth,"—a familiar name for the Devil in the midland counties,—"be-

hind him in the pulpit as he were preaching. That was enough for us."

"Nonsense," said Ann, "it was merely some particular placing of the lights that cast an odd shadow. How absurd, Betty, about the Old Youth."

"As you please, Miss," said Betty; "I've my own notions; but I niver, in all my born days, expected to see Mr. Thorsby preaching in Hillmartin chapel, nor to hear Mr. Nockels the local preacher saying niver was such preaching. No, truly! William Penn's 'No Cross, no Crown,' was not such stuff as they got every day at Hillmartin."

"'No Cross, no Crown,'" said Ann. "What makes you think it was 'No Cross, No Crown?'"

"Sukey Priddo," said Betty, "knows 'No Cross, no Crown' well enough. Mr. Heritage made her a present of it, and she's read it through five times."

With Betty Trapps's opinion of Thorsby's spiritual appearances, we may close this chapter, and leave the reader to think of it a little.

CHAPTER VIII.

WORSE AND WORSE WITH HARRY THORSBY.

One very hot, still July morning, before these just recorded occurrences, and nearly a year before Millicent Heritage's eventful journey to London, Betty Trapps, who had been gathering peas in the garden, ran into the house with her checked apron flung over her head, and going puff! puff! this way and that, as if to blow something away. When asked what was the matter, she said, "It's a harnet, as keen as mustard. It fled at me, and fled at me, like a big dumbledore."

"Yes," said George, "there is a nest of them in a hole in the barn-wall; we must suffocate them with brimstone-fumes at night.

They are very destructive to fruit, and dangerous to the horses."

"Suffocate a devil with brimstone!" said Betty. "That's a good un. This harnet is for all the world like th' owd enemy. He comes at you, and at you, as if he'd eat you."

Whilst George was quietly smiling at Betty's idea, there was a loud ringing of a poker and fire-shovel, and he saw Sam Davis, one of the labourers, crossing the garden beds, and looking up at the trees, as in search of something.

"There!" said Betty, "now the bees are swarming: this hot morning fetches them all out."

George, Ann, Mrs. Woodburn, and Betty, as well as the other maids, all hurried out to witness the interesting process of charming the bees down. Loud rung Sam Davis's music on the fire-shovel, and presently they saw a brown cluster of bees, as large as a

man's hat, and longer, hanging from the bough of an apple-tree.

The country people have various ways of accounting for the effect of this clangour on a fire-shovel in causing a swarm of bees to settle. Some think they like it, and so stop to hear it; others, that the young queen-bee, scared by the noise, settles on the first object she sees. Certain it is that the effect is general, and very marked. Others think this clangour must be made to claim your swarm, for if it settles on another man's property without such loud claim, and close following, you cannot assert your right to them. Be that as it may, our friends of Woodburn Grange saw their swarm hanging before them. There was a quick running for a sheet and an empty hive. The inside of the hive was rubbed with a mixture of beer and crushed black-currant leaves, or balm, and Sam Davis quietly approached them, put down two bricks on the sheet, cut off carefully the bough on

which the swarm hung; deposited it on the sheet between the two bricks; and then set the hive over it. The skill with which this was done, without irritating the bees, showed that Davis was an experienced hand at this operation. The bees seemed to settle themselves pretty tranquilly in their new home, but Mrs. Woodburn observed that a number of them continued to fly about the end of the bough whence the part covered with the swarm had been cut off. "Yes," said Davis, "they will come and try to find it, and worship the place where the queen alighted several days yet."

"Ay," said Betty, who had generally some religious fancy to attach to every curious occurrence, "that's just the way with many in their religion. They go and worship blindly for a few days; but it's only for a few, and then it's all over with them."

George Woodburn often thought of Betty's

quaint remarks long after others had forgotten them, for he found something in them; and in the course of the following spring, after Thorsby's conversion, he thought of these two occasions. "The harnet fled at me, and fled at me," said Betty, "like the owd enemy." "This is just as he seems to have done at Thorsby!" said George to himself. And then the bees worshipping the bough where the queen-bee sat, for a few days, and only for a few, as Betty said. How completely that applied to Thorsby! His career of pulpit eloquence and repentant zeal had been as brief as it had been dazzling. It was like the taking fire of dry furze on a common. It was an all-consuming flame for a brief period, and was gone, leaving a bare and blackened waste. Letty had watched with a sad terror the decrease and disappearance of this impetuous blaze of the soul. For a time there was a transition state in Thorsby, which, to a spectator only concerned to

observe the singularities of character, would have been an interesting study. In a morning he would be up as early as three o'clock, would go down into the kitchen, where there was always a raking-coal burning, break it up, and commence reading the Bible aloud, and with a somewhat singing tone, accompanied by an occasional shake of the head, as from some very impressive thought, and often with gushing showers of tears. Before the servants came down, he would return to his bed, and to a sound sleep, which would continue till ten o'clock, or later. Letty, now accustomed to this habit, got a cup of coffee herself on going down, and then waited patiently for her husband's appearance. He would come down sad and thoughtful, as it seemed, breakfast with few words, and away to his warehouse. At noon he would return all life and gaiety, and in the evening go off to his club. Yes, he was again an associate of his old associates !—the sow had returned to

its wallowing in the mire! Yet this did not prevent him being up the following morning, and reading aloud in his Bible with tears and tones of pious feeling.

Such an incongruous condition could not last. The different elements of his strange character were in conflict. The religious sentiment was maintaining its last efforts against the levity and love of pleasure in that unstable heart. For awhile Thorsby was the wonder once more of his townsmen, but this time it was the wonder and the scorn. Sad was the heart and the life of poor Letty; sad was the mood of mind in the once happy Woodburn Grange. Thorsby had lost all power over his own actions, yet he had not lost all feeling. Many were the paroxysms of remorse and tears which his wife had to witness, at first with some faint hopes, at last only with anguish and despair. Thorsby avoided being seen in the streets as much as possible, stole by back ways to his

warehouse, and at night renewed the orgies of his dissolute club.

George Woodburn spoke out his mind to the unfortunate man most indignantly, most sternly; and seeing that it had no effect, he entreated Letty to leave him, and return to Woodburn Grange. Mr. Woodburn, who had many things now to harass him, drove over in the day, while Thorsby was at the warehouse, and insisted that Letty should return with him, and leave the wretched man to his inevitable course. But Letty, worn and jaded as she now seemed by her constant wretchedness, refused positively to leave her husband. "No," she said, "to the last moment I will stay by him, and try every means to save him."

Mrs. Heritage, who had once effected so happy a result in him, again ventured a visit to him. It was twelve o'clock in the day. The remains of breakfast still stood on the table; and Thorsby, in his morning-gown

and slippers, was lying on the sofa, and reading a novel. The bloated, sickly, demoralised aspect of the man struck Mrs. Heritage with painful astonishment. He did not rise to receive her, but with a scowling, savage sort of look begged to know to what he owed the honour of this visit.

"It is from a tender concern for thee, Henry Thorsby, and thy dear wife, that I have wished to come."

"You can bestow your tender care on my wife, then," said Thorsby: "she is in the house."

"But, first," said Mrs. Heritage, in her soft and gentle voice, "I would like to speak a word or two to thee. I would ask thee if thou knowest whither thou art going now? What must be the awful ultimatum of thy present unhappy course?"

"Yes, madam, I know very well where I am going—to hell, madam, to hell!"

"And canst thou reconcile thyself to such

a thought—to the loss of thy precious soul—to the affliction thou must bring on thy wife, thy mother, thy child, and all that love thee ?"

"Let all that alone, Mrs. Heritage," said Thorsby. "Don't torture me with talk of my wife, my mother, or my child. I know all that as well as you do ; but if a man is born to be damned, not all the preachers or preacheresses on earth can save him."

Mrs. Heritage sat for a moment stupified by the defiant wickedness before her ; but, recovering herself, said, "No, all the powers on earth cannot save thee ; but these are not all the powers—God can save thee."

"But I know, madam," said Thorsby, fiercely, "that He won't save me. My day of grace is over. I know myself better than you do, with all your spirit-moving—better than that old fogie, David Qualm,—and yet he came pretty near the truth, when he said, 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.'

Madam, even you cannot make an empty sack stand upright; and this sack you are talking to is empty, empty—empty of all grace as the Devil himself. And so, good morning!"

With that, Thorsby rose up, flung down his book, and stalked out of the room. Never in all her experience had the good Friend beheld such a case of hardened bedevilment; never had her strong, clear mind felt its power so baffled.

That day Letty received a note from her husband, saying that important business at the warehouse in London required his immediate presence, and that he was gone by the coach: he might be some weeks away. Letty sat for some time as thunderstruck. Suddenly she sprang up, and ran upstairs. His travelling portmanteaus were there; she could discover no linen nor clothes taken away. His dressing-case stood as usual on his table. What could it mean? Had he gone off in

disgust at the visit of Mrs. Heritage? Surely that could not have caused him to go off without any change of clothes. A frightful idea came over her—had he gone to drown or destroy himself? She had seen him exhibit, more than once, symptoms of *delirium tremens*. She flung on a shawl, seized her bonnet, and away to the warehouse. Thomas Barnsdale said he certainly was gone by coach. What the important business could be was quite unknown to him: he had heard of nothing pressing, and he thought he should have done had there been such.

"But what will he do without clothes? I must send after him a supply."

"He must have taken clothes, ma'am," said Thomas Barnsdale. "He took a large new portmanteau with him, for the porter carried it to the coach."

Letty was more and more confounded. Then this flight was preconcerted! She left the warehouse without a word, and returned

home with a heart loaded to its last power of endurance with misery. What should she do? Go after him? No. Seek counsel from her parents, and brother, and sister? No. She shrunk from communicating and diffusing her distress. She sat down and wrote to him at the London warehouse a letter which must have touched a harder heart than Thorsby's. Return of post brought a letter full of expressions of love and regret, that he was obliged to go away so suddenly, but bidding her be of good cheer, and make herself happy till his return.

That letter did not much lighten Letty's trouble. The late conduct and habits of Thorsby, and this going away evidently on a concerted plan, were things not to be got over. Very, very sad was that once so gay heart. But Letty determined not to give up all hope lightly. She wrote again to her husband, and received again a cheerful, loving reply. She resolved to set herself

to look after the business with Thomas Barnsdale, and by attendance at the counting-house, to dissipate the thoughts which haunted her solitude. Thomas Barnsdale seemed pleased at her thinking of business, and explained matters concerning which he wanted advice, but which Mr. Thorsby of late did not give. Letty caught up the main ideas of the business rapidly, and Barnsdale said it would be the salvation of the concern if she gave her attention to it. Most of the day she spent at the counting-house, and the nurse and little Leonard came to her every now and then. The correspondence betwixt her and her husband went on with a fair and even loving tone.

But one day Thomas Barnsdale received her in the counting-house with a very distressed air, closed the door after her, and having carefully locked it, produced a letter, saying that he was compelled to break to her very unhappy news.

"What!" exclaimed Letty, springing from her chair, "is Henry dead? Oh, tell me quickly—what is it?"

"No, madam," said Barnsdale; "but I lament to say, he is dead to shame and honour."

Letty seized the letter and read. It was one in confidence from the agent at the London warehouse, a respectable and trustworthy man, to say, that Mr. Thorsby was actually living in Bond-street with a young woman whom he had brought up from Castleborough with him. Letty let fall the letter, and sank into the chair. Long she sat as in a swoon, yet her eyes were open and gazing on the opposite wall. Barnsdale was alarmed and was about to run for help, but suddenly Letty seized him by the arm, and heaving a deep, deep sigh, said, woefully,—"This is beyond all!—beyond all! How have I deserved this?"

"Dear madam," said Mr. Barnsdale, "this

is intolerable—it is not to be endured. Though I lose my office, I will instantly to London. I will drag that woman from his house. I will compel this unhappy man to return home."

"No! no! Mr. Barnsdale, that must not be," said Letty, drawing her hand across her brow as if bewildered. "I am so dizzy!—but that must not be. Stay you here. You cannot leave this post. I will go myself."

"You go, madam! No, you cannot—must not."

"Yes, I *will* go myself. O God, what a misery! But run, Mr. Barnsdale, secure the whole inside of the three o'clock coach, if possible. I will be ready."

Barnsdale looked aghast, perplexed to absolute despair; but Letty hastened away, and sent off the carriage post-haste for her brother George. She then set to work, ordered the nurse to be ready with the child for an instant journey to London; put up a few

things for herself, and awaited her brother. In less than two hours he was there, and the awful disclosure made. George was furious. Like Barnsdale, he was for going off at once and inflicting summary vengeance on the traitor. "What a viper! what a devil!" he exclaimed; "but he shall repent this foul, this diabolical wrong. Oh, my poor, dear Letty!" and he embraced his sister with passionate tears.

But Letty succeeded in showing him that it was better for her to go. She would take the child—that would move him if anything would—and George should accompany her to support her when it was necessary. George set off in haste for a change of linen and overcoat, and at three o'clock the sad party were seated in the London coach. Barnsdale had luckily secured the whole inside, so that, the nurse travelling occasionally outside well wrapped up, George and Letty could talk freely on their melancholy

topic, and the child could lie during the night on the front seat as snug as in his cradle.

We must not describe that sad, long, and for the most part silent journey. About ten in the morning the coach drove into the court of that old-fashioned, but then greatly frequented inn, the Swan-with-Two-Necks, in Lad-lane. There they descended, washed, redressed, and made such a breakfast as people in their state of mind could. George sent out into Wood-street to inquire if Mr. Thorsby was yet at the warehouse, and received for reply that he was not expected till twelve o'clock. A coach was at once ordered, and the whole party entered it and drove to Bond-street. It was stopped within fifty yards of the house sought, and George and Letty descended and walked on, followed by the nurse and child, which looked as bright as a child of six months can after a night's journey, through which it had slept like a top, and in a world whose trouble does

not concern it. Arrived at the door, Letty seemed as though she would sink, but George encouraged her to hold up and go through it in reliance on God. The door was opened by a servant, who asked their names, and said she would inquire if Mr. Thorsby were in. But Letty did not give her the opportunity of bringing a "No;" she took the child in her arms, and followed on the servant's heels.

"You had better wait here, ma'am," said the servant.

"Go on!" said Letty, authoritatively.

The girl looked astonished, but obeyed. Ascending the first flight of stairs, she opened a door into a large and handsomely furnished room, and said, "A lady, sir!"

Letty stepped in, and stood with the child on her arm. There sat the delinquent husband, in his morning-gown and slippers, reading the newspaper, and on the opposite side of the breakfast-table sat a very handsome young woman, of by no means un-

amiable appearance. The sight of Letty, however, produced a wondrous change. Thorsby started to his feet, and stood as rooted to the ground. His look was that rather of a ghost than of a living man. Pale as death, he trembled from head to foot like an aspen leaf. His female friend stood, a monument of terror, shame, and confusion. It was evident that she knew Mrs. Thorsby perfectly. But Letty, with a calmness with which heaven itself must have endowed her, advanced to Thorsby, and said, holding up the child towards him, "My dear Henry, I am not come to reproach you, but to reclaim you. Let this young woman retire, I would speak to you alone."

Thorsby made a hasty movement with his hand, and the young woman as hastily retired, evidently glad to escape.

"My dear Henry," said Letty, pale as marble, yet bearing up with wonderful firmness, "this little child wants its father; your

loving and ever-faithful wife wants her husband ; your poor, afflicted, and now very sick mother, wants her son. There, take your child, embrace it, love it, and come home with us."

Thorsby gasped, as for breath. He would have spoken, but he could not. He seized the child convulsively, and, bursting into a passion of sobs and tears, covered it with kisses. He sat down, and, bending over it, wept excessively. Letty softly fell on her knees at his feet, laid her hand on his, looked up to him with streaming eyes, and there was a long silence. As the storm of Thorsby's emotion somewhat subsided, Letty said, " And now, dear Henry, let us go. Let that unhappy girl return to her friends, or be provided for ; let her not be cast forth to utter ruin. And for us, let us return to our own home, to a new life, and to constant prayers for unfailing strength to do our duty. Come, come ! let us away at once."

"No, Letty, no!" exclaimed Thorsby, with a haggard look; "I can never return. I am a disgraced man. I can never show my face in our own town again. Go! be as happy as you can! I will give you everything; but return—for me—never!"

"And yet you *must* return, dear Henry. I cannot let you go to perdition. I have vowed to take you for better for worse, and I will stand by you to the *very* worst. Think not of temporary shame—think of your own precious, eternal soul! Think of your child, your mother. Think of me, if you yet—if you ever loved me!"

"Loved you!" Thorsby stamped on the ground. "Letty Woodburn, I never loved but you! That name has been my life, my inspiration, my shield, but at last it failed me. Satan was too strong in me. Never, never, can I again pollute you by my presence. I am a God-abandoned man! He has lifted me up only to cast me down beyond re-

demption. Nothing, nothing, can restore me."

"Remember the prodigal son," said Letty. "Remember the all, all-forgiving Father. Oh, return, return! and all may yet be well. If you will not return, think! what good shall my life do me? What shall be the sad, awful career of this dear babe without a father—with only the sad, sad story of one! Come, oh, come home. George is here; he will show you how all will forgive and forget."

"George!" exclaimed Thorsby, and seeming inspired with sudden madness; "George! let him not come in—I cannot bear it. If he comes"—he snatched a pistol from a side-table—"if he comes here, I will put this bullet through my brain."

Letty stood terror-stricken. She saw that all hope of inducing him to face his old connections was hopeless.

"Put that down," said Letty, sternly; "you terrify me. George will not come unasked;

and if you will not return to Castleborough, I will come and live in London."

"You!" said Thorsby. "You, who love the country so, whose heart has so many ties there!"

"I can do it willingly," said Letty. "I can be very happy with you and dear little Leonard anywhere. My greatest ties are here."

"It cannot be," said Thorsby, assuming an awful look. "Angels of light and devils cannot dwell together. I say, once for all, go, and leave me to my fate, or I will end it on this spot."

Letty started back with the child in her arms, which clung affrighted to her bosom, and with a wild and long-fixed look, said, "Then farewell! but oh, no, not for ever! not for ever!" and with that she opened the door, gave one other last look at the unhappy man as he stood ghastly and motionless—a look of misery beyond all words—then dis-

appeared. George saw her coming, still and tearless, clasping the child to her heart, and he knew that her loving attempt had failed. He supported her tenderly to the cab, and drove back to the inn.

"Let us get home, dear George," she said, as they entered the inn; "I would not die here," and she shuddered.

"Die!" said George. "No, dearest, you shall not die. You will not die for the faithlessness of a bad man; you must live for us and for your child. But we will away home at once."

He laid his unhappy sister on the sofa, and rang for wine. "Take some refreshment, dear Letty, and we will be off at once." Letty took a glass of wine mechanically, and closing her eyes, looked like a beautiful corpse. George ordered a post-chaise, and so they posted all the way down. Letty lay through the journey as in a sort of trance, with a passive marble look, but still

conscious, and answering in a whisper to her brother's anxious questions. This state continued after they reached home.

"It is a blessing of God," said the physicians who were called in; "the enormous strain of the mind has exhausted her animal powers —and it is well: a different action, and the brain must have felt the shock, and could not have borne it. Let her remain so. If she can take nourishment, well; but for some time let her rest. Let us hope that no violent reaction will take place, when we shall have to fear delirium, and, perhaps, actual insanity."

The news of these events—of the heroic endeavours of Letty to reclaim her husband, and of her present critical state—brought her mother and sister instantly to her side. Under their tender care the judicious system of the physicians was carefully carried out; and in a few days' time tears were seen stealing beneath the eyelashes of Letty; her

mother gently kissed her, and she raised her arms and clasped them round her neck. Without opening her eyes, she was conscious of the presence of Ann, and put out her hand to clasp her, and then she lay and wept long and silently. Her dear, watching relations soon found that she was perfectly conscious of all that had passed; but a wondrous calm had come over her, and she said to her mother and Ann, "Do not be anxious about me. I shall soon be better. I must live as one of God's children, to bear His rod, and to seek to save the lost. Promise me never to blame him in my presence. Join with me in prayer daily, nightly, incessant prayer, for his recovery. That is the business of my life now. If I succeed in the end it will be worth all the earth can send of sorrow and suffering."

In a few weeks Letty was about again. A pale, thin, serious, but energetic-looking woman. Could that be the once laughing,

blithe, singing Letty? It was the same bright, pure spirit, saddened but ennobled by the ordeal of trial and distress, and by a life's aim the noblest and most sacred that ever lifted a womanly soul into the regions of a wisdom beyond her years. She soon returned to her attention to business. Closely veiled, she walked silently through the quietest streets from her house to the warehouse; but the marked respect, the lifted hats of the gentlemen, the regardful and sympathising looks of ladies, and the deep curtseys of humbler women, as she passed, showed what a sensation the narrative of her doings and sufferings had created in the place. Thomas Barnsdale, by his silent, respectful attention, showed the same effect on him. One of the first papers that he put into her hand, was a deed of gift, regularly drawn by a legal hand, and duly executed by Thorsby, making over to her and their son the whole of the property and trade in

Castleborough. He had reserved only to himself the business in London, which, as a commission business, received the goods manufactured at Castleborough, and exported them on a percentage. This deeply affected Letty. It showed that amid all the weakness and impulsive folly of her husband, there were great redeeming qualities in him, and she was more than ever resolved to hope for his final recovery, and to devote her life to that object. Her father, tremendously incensed against him, told her to leave the business to Barnsdale, and the house to Thorsby's mother, and come back to Woodburn Grange, where the tenderest love awaited her. But Letty held to her wiser course. Old Mrs. Thorsby, already in ill health, was completely broken down by these last unhappy events, and could not last long. Letty would not leave her, but attended her with every loving care. To make the business more secure, she gave Thomas Barnsdale a

certain share in it, of which he was equally deserving, from his faithfulness and unwearied attention to its interests.

Not many weeks, however, passed without another blow from the evil fate which now seemed to be pursuing Thorsby and his family. Letty received a letter from her husband, informing her that his agent in New York had absconded with 5000*l.* of his money, and left the goods in the warehouse there very much exposed. He was that moment departing for Liverpool to embark for America. When he might return was uncertain; but if God could hear the prayer of such a wretch, he prayed for all His blessings on her and their dear child. Letty, struck as with a sudden wound, hastened to the counting-house to inform Mr. Barnsdale of this startling news. She found that he already was in possession of it.

"What is the extent of the hazard?" she asked. "Will it ruin us?"

"Oh no;" said Mr. Barnsdale. "If the money is not recovered—as very likely it may not: that continent is vast; it is very much like hunting a needle in a truss of hay, hunting a rogue in it—then there are 5000*l.* gone. The stock, I see, in the New York store is, or should be, about 5000*l.* more in value: 10,000*l.*"

"That is a great deal," said Letty.

"Yes; a great deal too much to lose," replied Barnsdale; "but we can bear a good deal more than that. It may hamper our money accounts a little; but I am happy to say that Mr. Heritage has sent me word that he is prepared to assist us at a pinch to a large amount. That, madam, we owe to his high esteem of you." He might have added, and to his own confidence-inspiring character. "And," added Mr. Barnsdale, "do not let this event distress you. In my opinion it may prove the very reverse of what it seems. Mr. Thorsby has wonderful

energies in his nature, strangely linked, it must be said, with sad weaknesses; but let him once be roused in some important cause, and the latent forces will be sure to come out. See what a wonderful eloquence he displayed, before unknown to everybody—unknown to himself. I am sure he will pursue this unblushing rogue to the very extremities of the earth. He has all the spirit of the hunter in him, and nothing in the world could be so beneficial to him as such an excitement and chase."

"Pray God it may be so," said Letty.

"Amen and Amen," said Barnsdale, with much devotion.

The very next day, Mrs. Heritage, to her extreme surprise, received a letter, dated Liverpool, from Thorsby. In this he made a late but earnest apology for his former rude return to her well-intentioned admonitions, and now begged, as a parting favour, a few

lines from her as "a comfort to him on the deep waters."

Mrs. Heritage sat for a short time in silence, and then wrote this reply :—

"FRIEND HENRY THORSBY,

"I think I may address thee as friend when our dear Redeemer so addressed his betrayer, Judas Iscariot. Thou askest me for comfort on the deep waters ; but what comfort can there be to an alien from God ? What peace can there be to the wicked ? Yes ! I will pray for thee ! as thou desirest. I will pray earnestly that God will send thee troubles upon troubles. That he will toss thee with tempests on the ocean, and chase thee with misfortunes on land. I will pray that thou mayst suffer wrong, and robbery, and deceit, and betrayal. That thou mayst drink to the dregs of that cup of injury, and shame, and sorrow, that thou hast been so lavishly pouring out for others who should

have been dear to thee as thy own soul. I forget—thy own soul is not dear to thee; more and sadder pity. I will pray for heart-soreness, and weariness of soul, for perils in cities and in deserts upon thee. For shattered prospects, ruined hopes, ruin of goods and good name, and for pursuit of measures and cruelties unto the verge of death. Mayst thou be solitary and forsaken, as thou hast left others of whom thou wert not worthy; may sickness overtake thee where there is none to tend or soothe. May the blackness and the shadow of death overtake thy soul and overwhelm thee with the terrors of hell. May its torments seize on thy vitals and consume all that is within thee of vile, and base, and unholy. And when the tempest and the earthquake have done their mission on thee, mayst thou be favoured to hear the still, small voice, which comes only to the ear opened by a pardoning God. All these woes I wish thee, not from anger or a

spirit of unworthy vengeance, but from that love which is over all, and yearns after all that lives. Knowest thou not that the hard ground must first be torn up and rent in pieces by the plough and harrows of the husbandman before it can receive the seed of a new harvest? May the hard ground of thy heart, Henry Thorsby, be thus ploughed up and harrowed in sunder, for so only do I believe that it can be reduced to that soft and plastic state in which the seed of divine grace can once more grow. And that it may be so will be the daily prayer, the earnest wrestlings of the soul of one who would rejoice over thy recall to the paths of virtue and of heaven, as over a dearly beloved son. Thy friend in the truth, and the love which is indestructible and unfathomable,

"Rebecca Heritage."

Thorsby received and read this letter in a

profound silence: in silence he arose, thrust it into his pocket, and walked solemnly on board. The winds are bearing him away on a long and arduous pilgrimage. Let us leave him awhile to the unseen but ever-present hand which pursues with the scourge, but forgets not the balm.

CHAPTER IX.

ALL WRONG AT WOODBURN.

Summer was once more shining and breathing its perfumes over the country round Woodburn. The pleasant fields stood full of flower-embroidered grass; of green corn waving and billowing in the scented breeze. The trees shed their verdurous gloom beneath them; the red wild rose, and the snowy discs of the elder flowers, mingled their odours with the yellow-and-red honeysuckle blossoms in the fresh hawthorn hedges. The larks carolled high in the blue air; brooks ran glittering down to the river, and the river glided on in stately beauty. All was beautiful and happy in nature as ever, but over the Grange lay a stillness, within was a

stillness. Betty Trapps, pursuing her accustomed household duties, neither sung that "very cutting" song—"Once I freedah engyed," nor the equally favourite hymn—"We are marching through Emmanuel's land." Mr. Woodburn wore a grave and sad air; Mrs. Woodburn sat knitting in deep thought, or watched her cheese-making, without any of her former jollity. Ann was with Letty in Castleborough, and George was taking his solitary rides over the farm, as if something lay on his heart which had banished that cheerful countenance so natural to him. There were no preparations for any festive gathering in the hayfield. "The light of other days" had disappeared like a dream.

The conduct of Thorsby had verified all the instinctive prescience in Betty Trapps's nature. Letty, the loved and loving creature of gladness, the sunshine of that once happy home; the flitting shape, the ringing, singing voice of joy in it, was a deserted wife, and the once

jocose and sportive Thorsby, a disgraced and shameless fugitive. Nor was that all; those shadows which Mrs. Heritage had foreseen in the hayfield fête, had not only fallen on Woodburn Grange, but on other spots around. Fair Manor itself had not escaped. There was the only child there, then the hope and happiness of her house, now a serious and nervous woman, who had passed through a severe baptism, and now shrunk from intercourse beyond her own family walls. Awaking from the impassioned dreams of her London visit, she found that she had wounded another too deeply to leave peace in her own bosom. She had candidly stated to Edmund Barrington, that great as was her affection for him, she never could be happy in the consciousness of the affliction she had occasioned to a most worthy, faithful, and noble heart, nor under the sense of the deep blame, which all those most dear to her, or most connected with the attach-

ments and the memories of her youth, awarded her. She had resolved, therefore, to do the only penance which should mark her sense of her wrong, and satisfy her innermost feeling of sacred duty—never to marry; but to devote herself as soon as her health should be restored, if indeed her shattered nerves should ever again regain their healthy tone, to the works of the good Samaritan.

Her mother had, through Mrs. Barrington, explained to that family the severe shock and shattering through which her daughter had gone, and the sensitive state of her nervous system still. She returned to Edmund Barrington the diamond-clasped bracelet which he had given Millicent, and which under no circumstances could she wear, but she entreated that all other little mutual gifts might be retained as memorials of a friendship, which both she and her daughter trusted would still and for ever remain unbroken.

It is only justice to say that these communications were received in the most beautiful spirit. Both Edmund Barrington and his sisters wrote to Millicent in the most kind and sympathizing terms. Edmund declared himself willing to await the time when full health might bring happier thoughts to Millicent, and his sisters expressed their sincere sorrow that the tender conscience of Millicent had dissipated to them so many pleasant hopes. They declared that they should never cease to recollect with pleasure the happy time of her visit, or to regret the prospect of losing her as a sister. No hope, however, was held out by Millicent of a change in her present sentiments ; and in no very long time not only those amiable women, but their brother too, had selected their partners for life, and were scattered into their respective homes, amid all the solaces and distinctions of an enormous affluence.

Millicent Heritage regained her former

estimation amongst her friends by a knowledge of this conscientious renunciation of all selfish happiness for herself; and the sense of this did much to renew her vigour of frame, though it did not banish the grave and thoughtful expression from her face and manner. She was often seen mounted on her favourite mare, May Dew, followed by Tom Boddily, taking her way towards the Grange, where she was always received with love by Mrs. Woodburn and by Ann, when at home, and by Mr. Woodburn and George with much kindly regard. Many, too, were her visits to Bilts' Farm, and her long conversations with Elizabeth Drury, which seemed always to fill her with a renewed spirit of peace and satisfaction.

The only gleam of the past happy days seemed to be on the head of the wise and loving Ann Woodburn. The effect of his father's changed views, revealed on his deathbed, had been on Sir Henry Clavering such

as she had hoped. He had thought deeply on this unexpected confession. The peace with which he had seen his father depart had made a deep impression on his mind through his affectionate nature. He had arrived soon so far, that he felt that there was something beyond the mere teachings of physical nature and the wisdom of the schools which we need to enable us to push off our spiritual bark into the unknown with confidence. He accepted, therefore, like his father, the Saviour which the Gospel proclaims, though ponderous difficulties lay betwixt his conceptions of this Saviour as a messenger of God, and as God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. But Ann, filled now with the brightest hopes, helped him along this valley of stumbling and of huge stones fallen from the bald rocks of long past ages. She put into his hands Paley's "Evidences," Butler's "Analogy," and other ably reasoned works of her Church, and marked with deep

satisfaction their gradual effect. She no longer talked of leaving Sir Henry to his freedom of choice for a wife. She found herself daily drawn into a nearer and more kindred unity with him. All real obstacles to their marriage were, in fact, surmounted, and that event was regarded as at hand, when these unhappy circumstances connected with Letty's fortunes, and others yet to be related, made her beg that the marriage might be a little delayed, that it might be celebrated under happier auspices, if possible. Meantime, the political difficulties of the period, and irritated condition of the people at large, and of the manufacturing population in particular, kept Sir Henry actively engaged in his magisterial duties. He generally looked in at the Grange in going to and returning from Castleborough; and whilst Ann was there, at Letty's, he frequently went in and dined with them. Every day tended to present the excellence of his heart and the

clear solidity of his mind more attractively to the whole Woodburn family. Ann only was held back from the goal of her earthly happiness by the cloud that lay on her most beloved ones.

The settlement of Mr. Trant Drury in their immediate neighbourhood had not proved such a source of satisfaction as had been hoped for. Those dictatorial and hurrying qualities in his character, which farmer Barrowclouch had noticed, soon began to press themselves unpleasantly on most of those around him. That he was a first-rate agriculturist of a particular school there could be no question ; but it was a school essentially different from that which prevailed in all that part of the country. It was a country naturally fertile, varied in its features, and rendered extremely pleasant by the fine and free-grown fences, the scattered hedge-row trees, and patches of wood. With all these, Mr. Drury made war to the knife—no, to the

hatchet and the saw. He expressed his great surprise that any agriculturists could yet be found who would sacrifice so much of their valuable land to the mere growth of useless bushes and almost worthless hedge-row trees. As to the woods and plantations, they might remain, and be made profitable by liberal thinning; but as for the hedges, he would have them all pared down to the shortest state possible to be fences at all, and the hedge-row trees, he would cut down every one of them. He would leave only here and there on the land a spreading tree for shelter for the cattle from the sun in summer; but as for hedges, they were useful only as a means of separating fields, and these he would cut to the quick, and narrow as much as possible; nay, he would cut down half of the hedges altogether, and leave the fields —especially the tillage fields—four or five times their present size. He calculated that nearly a tenth of the superficies of the country

might be thus brought into profitable culture. As for the hedge-row trees, he said they were so frequently lopped on their trunks as they grew, to prevent their spreading too widely, that as timber they were a congeries of knots, and of no use but for firewood. In fact, he would have reduced the whole country to a condition as bare as the back of your hand; for beauty or the picturesque had no organ in his brain,—their place was engrossed by the organ of profit.

"Now, of what mortal use," he would say to Mr. Woodburn, as he rode over his farm, or through the neighbourhood with him,—"of what mortal use are these little shapeless crofts and paddocks with their fences running in all sorts of ways but straight lines,—these little, often triangular plots, with their meandering huge hawthorn hedges, actually turning and doubling on themselves? Sweep all these crooked, scrambling fences away, and

have some fine, large, shapely pastures instead. And here is a brook now—do look at it. Would any one have supposed, with the present value of land, that it should be allowed to turn and twine about as it does, forming what the Scotch call links, and as we may call them bows and loops, positively occupying three times the ground which it would if reduced to a straight, handsome course, as it soon might be?"

Mr. Woodburn replied "that in truth they might remove some of the rambling fences, and enlarge those little plots to advantage, but he should be sorry to see all those beautiful hawthorn hedges now throwing out their odorous sprays of wild roses and eglantine, cut close like the cropped bristly head of a parish pauper."

"Beauty!" said Mr. Trant Drury,—"beauty! My dear sir, we cannot live by beauty. We cannot pay rent by beauty. The interests of this densely populated

country cannot be maintained by empty notions of beauty. When you want to go to market with your produce, see what your crop of beauty will bring you. No, sir; as much corn, cattle, hay, potatoes, and the like substantials, for which we labour, and from which we must hope to live, as you please. The greatest possible return for the greatest possible amount of labour and skill expended; —that is my doctrine and my practice; and they are the only principles that will in the long run make this country what it ought to be."

"But man cannot live by bread alone," said Mr. Woodburn; "that is a principle established by an authority which I hope, Mr. Drury, you consider as of as much validity as your modern save-all doctrine."

"I bow to the wisdom of our Lord," said Mr. Drury; "but what He undoubtedly meant was, not your visionary thing beauty, but divine grace,—'Man shall not live by bread

alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'"

"Very true," said Mr. Woodburn; "and out of that divine mouth issued these divine words: 'Behold the lilies of the field, how they grow.' He who made beauty as well as material food, and showered it on the earth, and continues so to shower it, knew and knows that we want food for every part of our nature. 'Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.' Now, according to my notions, every part of us demands its proper food. Food for the support of the body, grace for the life of the soul, beauty for the imagination, love for the heart, and truth for the intellect. To feed only the body, and to devote all our labours and our lands only to this purpose, is, in my opinion, to make ourselves no better than the beasts that perish."

Mr. Drury smiled contemptuously. "That is all very well for you, Mr. Woodburn, who

live at ease on your own land; but that sort of doctrine won't do for tenant-farmers."

Mr. Woodburn thought it as good for tenant-farmers as for anybody else; and should be very sorry to see the tenant-farmers allowed to follow such a system of agricultural economy, as would make the whole country as bare as a drill-ground, and as ugly as sin. He had seen this style of cultivation carried out in some parts of the country, and he would sooner emigrate to the American forests than live in such a featureless district. He thought, to cut down hedges almost to the ground, and exterminate every tree, was by no means beneficial to cattle or sheep, which in cold weather, and especially during the sharp east winds of early spring, required shelter as well as food.

After one or two conversations of this kind Woodburn thought Mr. Drury would say no more to him on this subject, but he was greatly mistaken; for Mr. Trant Drury was

one of those people that we now and then come across, who carry their hobbies to a perfect monomania. They are always on the same subject, in all places and with all persons. Though they may have told you the same thing fifty times, they never seem to recollect it, but treat it as perfectly new, and go over the whole ground with merciless pertinacity. After a few inflictions of the all-profit and threadbare country doctrine, Mr. Woodburn began to wince visibly, and to say rather crustily, "Oh! Mr. Drury, you have told us all that again and again."

"But you don't benefit by it," Mr. Drury would say.

"No, nor ever shall, so far as I am concerned," Mr. Woodburn would reply.

To George Woodburn and Elizabeth Drury, who had become deeply attached to each other, and with the mutual consent of parents on both sides, this disagreement of tastes in their fathers was a subject of the greatest

concern and anxiety. George quietly begged of Mr. Drury not to say anything to his father on agricultural topics, for that nothing would induce him to adopt any new notions; but then Mr. Trant Drury's whole thought, feeling, taste, and conversation were agricultural. New modes of tillage, new implements, new manures, new kinds of vegetables for winter feed,—these made up the furniture, stock, and staple of his mind. His imagination stood as thickly planted with those ideas as his rick-yard with ricks, his fold-yard with cattle, or his fields with crops. George Woodburn listened patiently to his perpetual talk on these subjects, and admitted to a certain extent the value of them: but as to cutting down hawthorn hedges and hedgerow trees, he stood out as firmly as his father. When Mr. Drury was riding his indefatigable hobby in that direction, he remained quiet and let the stream flow over him. His after-conversations with Elizabeth

were a rich compensation for this otherwise rather severe martyrdom. Every day showed Elizabeth in a more loveable character. Her lively, cheerful manner, combined with a beautifully intellectual and religious sentiment, and great intelligence, made her the beloved friend of Ann and Mrs. Woodburn; and Mr. Woodburn looked on her with pride as his future daughter-in-law. He only regretted that such a woman should be the daughter of what he began in his own house to term such an unmitigated bore.

Mr. Trant Drury went to work vigorously on his own farm to exemplify his peculiar code of agriculture, and, as he said, to set an example to the benighted farmers around. His landlady, who lived in London, readily granted him permission to pare down his fences and fell hedgerow trees as he pleased. As the property was her own, but would go, at her death, for want of direct issue, to another branch of the family, she was at

liberty to do this. The very first autumn and winter, Mr. Drury had men cutting close the fences, and felling all the trees but the oaks, which must stand till the proper season for peeling, in spring. Part of this timber he was allowed to employ in extending his outbuildings, and in making new gates, gate-posts, hurdles, &c. Part went to the wood-merchant, its proceeds to be remitted to the landlady.

Mr. Woodburn saw with indignation the destruction of these hedges and trees, the wide, bare gap in the general beauty of the landscape thus created, and his feelings were partaken by many others of the neighbouring country and town, who denounced Mr. Drury as a Goth, and hoped there would be no imitators of this unloveable sort of thrift. Mr. Woodburn could not restrain himself, on the next visit of Elizabeth Drury, from speaking in a sarcastically jeering manner of this frightful system, as he called it, of her

father. Elizabeth, to whose ideas of beauty it was as great an outrage as to Mr. Woodburn's, burst into tears; and Mrs. Woodburn intreated her husband to desist, saying, that Miss Drury was not responsible for the acts of her father, and did all in her power, by affectionate kindness, to make Elizabeth forget it. Mr. Woodburn's own natural goodness of heart caused him to express his regret for having hurt her feelings, and adding that certainly Elizabeth must as much regret it as he did. But there was a poisoned arrow fixed into her sensitive heart, which nothing could effectually extract. She had begged and entreated that the but thinly scattered trees on the farm might be spared, but in vain. She witnessed their fall with grief, which she could not conceal, and had thus incurred a considerable degree of anger from her father. She had heard the mortifying remarks of the Heritages and other friends; but the ground of painful feeling and of comment which

it had laid in the mind of all the Woodburns, and especially of Mr. Woodburn, was a source of real unhappiness. She felt afraid to go to the Grange when Mr. Woodburn was in the house, and when she did meet him there, or elsewhere, she thought he looked coldly on her. She was conscious that her very presence brought to his mind this piece of Vandalism—the blot on the face of the country, as he termed it. She heard of his by no means measured remarks upon it amongst his neighbours ; for though a quiet and courteous man, he was strong in his feelings.

George never alluded to the subject in her company, and never omitted one of his usual visits to the farm. He even sat and heard Mr. Drury's conversation on the subject, for nothing could prevent him continually introducing it, and remained passive, and making but now and then an incidental reply, endeavouring to divert the discussion to something

more agreeable to the ladies. But nothing could turn Mr. Trant Drury long. He would say, "Well, I find my plans don't meet with the approbation of my neighbours, eh? They would like all to live in a wood, and pay rent, where they do pay rent, for growing their landlord's timber. Ah! they shall see in a while! They shall see by my rick-yards how the matter stands."

To George, as to Elizabeth, this was a bitter drop which had fallen into their cup. They saw that a strong antagonism would assuredly grow up betwixt their fathers. All their ideas of rural economy were so totally and irreconcileably opposed. Bitterly did Elizabeth deplore their ever coming into such close and permanent contact; bitterly did she repent having proposed their removal hither. By her marriage with George, she would have come amongst her friends here without one painful circumstance. But the change was made, and these two faithful hearts resolved

that no family dissension which might arise should break or weaken the sacred tie of their own souls. They endeavoured, each of them, so to arrange their visits to each other's house, as to come as little in the way of each other's father as possible, without seeming to make an actual coldness or breach. But this was a most difficult plan of operations to manage. If Mr. Drury did not see George for several days, he would say—

"Well, George Woodburn seems to avoid us. He is like his father, I suppose. He takes part with him, and can't forgive this ridding my farm of its lumber and rubbish."

"No, dear father," Elizabeth would say, "George does not concern himself about it; but he is very busy—and I wish, however, you would not mention the subject so often to him. It looks as though you wished to remind him of his father's vexation. Oh, do, dear father, let the matter be a tabooed subject. There is plenty to talk of besides."

"Plenty to talk of!—to be sure there is. But I have no notion of people having such thin skins, such tender ears, that they can't bear to hear of a tree falling or of a hedge being lopped. And I am sure I very seldom refer to the thing."

"Only every time that George Woodburn is here, dear father. Though he does not trouble himself about it, it must become tiresome to him."

"So he finds my company tiresome, does he, eh? A nice young man! Perhaps he'll find yours tiresome soon, Elizabeth, if he be so difficult to please. So that's the way the wind blows, eh? Um—um!"—or rather an indescribable noise made with his mouth shut and through his nose.

At Woodburn Grange, Mr. Woodburn would say—

"Have you seen Miss Drury lately?"

"Yes; she was here this morning."

"Oh, she was! She takes care that I

don't see her. I suppose she's not pleased with me because I don't like the devastations of that father of hers. I suppose she takes up the cudgels for him. Well, I am sorry for it—I am sorry indeed that such a sweet, good creature has such a father. As for poor Mrs. Drury, she does not seem to have a soul of her own. She is just like a scared automaton, if an automaton could be scared. She must have had a pretty life of it with such a man."

If George were in, he would quietly get up and go out, and then Mrs. Woodburn, or Ann, if at home, would say, "Pray don't make such remarks, dear father—or husband—don't you see how painful they are to George; and as for Elizabeth Drury, she loves and honours you most sincerely. Oh, what a misfortune that ever they came so near us!"

In the meantime, Mr. Trant Drury went on his way in his own way, which was of

unwavering, confident comfortableness in his assurance that all which he thought and did was right. To him all adverse criticism was ignorance, all opposition envy. He lamented the benighted condition of his bucolic neighbours, and was certain that he should show them all their deficiencies. Mr. Drury had, in the north, been a high authority, and he soon let it be known that it was the same Mr. Trant Drury, whose letters in the "Farmers' Journal," and in the York and Doncaster newspapers, on all agricultural topics were so well known. "Eh! so this is the great Mr. Drury of Yorkshire," said Sir Roger Rockville, and Sir Benjamin Bullockshed, and Squire Swagsides, "that we have got among us: that is very fortunate." Mr. Drury soon took the opportunity to make the public aware of this great fact still further, by some letters in the Castleborough papers, containing remarks on the improvements which might obviously be introduced

into that part of the country. He was very soon consulted by landowners on the nature of such improvements, which they hoped would lead to an augmentation of rents. Mr. Drury soon became much in request for valuations of stock and crops in cases of farms passing from one tenant to another, in matters of drainage and manures, and treatment of woods,—and in all these departments he was really extremely skilful. He attended public meetings in different counties of an agricultural character, and made speeches which went through the newspapers far and wide.

It was soon made known by himself that he had been consulted by Sir Roger Rockville, Sir Benjamin Bullockshed, Sir Timothy Sheepshanks, Lord Rancliffe, the Earl Manvers, and others, on the condition of their estates. Not one of them, however, we are well informed, could be brought to listen to cropping all their fences close, and knocking

down all their hedge-row trees, except Sir Benjamin Bullockshed, and one or two of his neighbours. In the rest, Mr. Drury said, the old feudal notions of things were too strongly rooted to allow of their ridding their lands of any trees. Mr. Woodburn, when he heard that Mr. Drury had actually become the steward of Sir Benjamin Bullockshed, and was going to display his science on his farms, blessed his stars that that estate lay at some distance, and that the odious disfigurement and stripping bare of nature would not often offend his eyes.

In the meantime, Mr. Drury, in the late autumn, had certainly a fine rick-yard and cattle-yard to show. His sheep were in fine condition, and he had an ample supply of turnips and mangel wurzel for winter feed. He had also sown several acres of carrots for his horses and cattle, then a matter of wonder and curiosity to his neighbours, as applied to that purpose, having before been

thought of only for culinary use. With the working-men, the labourers of the neighbourhood, Mr. Drury was by no means in favour. He had brought with him a great variety of machinery, thrashing and winnowing machines, tedding and raking machines, which at that day, when such machinery was little known, were looked upon as all intended to supersede manual labour. They were beheld with an evil eye, and the indignant labourers were heard to wish that the earth would open and swallow up these godless and man-starving inventions. Besides this, Mr. Drury kept a very sharp eye on every man who worked for him. He had a bailiff, or headman, who timed all the men as they arrived in the morning, and noted the exact minute down, and a half, or even a quarter of an hour, on any day was deducted at the end of the week. He was always riding about on that tall roan horse of his, and so continually at their heels, or ready to drop upon

them at any minute. They nick-named him Drury the Fire-eater, and wondered what they had done that the devil had sent him into their country.

The following spring a circumstance occurred which pre-eminently delighted not only the labourers, but the farmers around, and in no small degree Mr. Woodburn himself. Mr. Drury had written so much on the necessity of cleaning, dressing your fields, of extirpating to the utmost every species of couch-grass and weed, and that your growing crops should be as free from them as your gardens ; he had made so many cutting remarks on the slovenliness of some of the neighbouring farms, and characterised the style of cultivation thereabout as lax, that it was with singular pleasure and merriment that they observed several of his corn crops, and one six-acre field in particular, as thickly mixed with docks as if the seed had purposely been sown half-and-half. There was

a going and riding from all quarters to witness this wonderful sight. It was the talk at market, and Mr. Drury was accosted with much country wit on the occasion. "Is that," asked farmers, "a part of your new plans, Mister Drury? Are these a new sort of carrots of yourn?" Carrots being just introduced by Mr. Drury, this was received with much laughter. Mr. Drury replied angrily, and in the words of Scripture, "An enemy hath done this."

But who was this enemy! It was certain that Mr. Drury had his enemies in abundance amongst the labourers; but these men were too regularly engaged in hard work to collect such a quantity of dock seed, and to sow it so completely. There was a touch of ingenuity in it, too, which seemed beyond their habitual dulness. The suspicion turned in another direction.

In the autumn, on proceeding to get his potatoes, it was discovered by the men that the

rows had been extensively plundered, by the potatoes being extracted from the sides of the rows, the tops being left standing, and the earth at the sides carefully put back and trampled hard. There was ingenuity there, too.

Mr. Drury not only set a man to watch at night, but he watched with him, and they soon captured, in the fact, a sort of half-witted, wandering vagabond fellow of Castleborough, named Ned King. This Ned King, a thin shangling fellow, dirty and ragged, and seldom without a pipe in his mouth, was reckoned only half-witted, but, at the same time, he had a cunning about him of no ordinary calibre. He was accustomed to ramble the streets, and early in the morning turn over with his feet or his hands, as carefully as a hen scratching in the chaff at a barn-door, the dust and scraps of paper swept out of the shops. It was said that he had occasionally recovered thus one-pound

and even five-pound notes. It was certain that one day, in a main street, he was seen to stoop down and pick up a half-guinea in gold. A person close behind said, "That is mine!" "Oh!" said Ned, keeping the piece in his closed hand, "is yours a straight or a crooked one?" The man immediately imagined that it must be a crooked one, or so stupid a fellow would not have thought of it. "A crooked one, to be sure," said the man. "Then it is not yours," added King, opening his hand, "for this is straight;" and the claimant disappeared amid the jeers of the people.

Ned being caught, begged hard to be let go, saying, he would make Mr. Drury amends; but such was not Mr. Drury's creed. He was for the most summary punishment of all such depredators, and King was carried before the magistrates, and thence to the House of Correction for three months. The extraordinary crop of

docks on Mr. Drury's farm was no sooner talked of, than many people recollected seeing King here and there all round the country collecting, as he said, bird-seeds of different sorts; but they noticed him particularly gathering dock-seeds, which he said were for birds, but which nobody had ever known collected for such a purpose. It was shown by some of King's neighbours that he had whole sack-bags of such seeds in his possession during the winter. But his having collected such seeds, and his having whole bags of them, did not prove that he had sown Mr. Drury's corn-fields with them. There was no moral doubt whatever that he had done it; but it had been done so adroitly, that no one had ever seen him about Mr. Drury's farm at night. He must have done it in midnights when every soul was fast asleep.

Mr. Drury had him up before the magistrates; and brought plenty of evidence of his

having collected dock-seed for six or seven miles round, and of his having sacks full of it; but when the magistrates called on him to show how he had disposed of it, Ned grinned, and said, "How was he to know? He was always selling seeds and yarbs (herbs) to all sorts of people, and he did not know their names." The old proverb of any fool taking a horse to water, and not all England being able to make him drink, was verified in Ned's case. Nobody could convict him, and he was too shrewd to convict himself. The magistrates were compelled to dismiss him with a threat, and everybody said Mr. Drury had better have let Ned alone, he would do him some other ill-turn. And this soon appeared to be the case, for Mr. Drury's field-gates were continually found wide open in a morning, and cattle and sheep let in or let out, and the greatest damage done. Sheep and cattle were found eating up and treading down the corn crops, and his horses

were gone off, and were discovered in some neighbouring parish.

In this case the able and acute Mr. Trant Drury had found his match in the half-witted Ned King, the fool of Castleborough, much to the delectation of farmers and labourers all round Woodburn.

CHAPTER X.

WOODBURN AND ROCKVILLE AT WAR.

Once more spring; and though many things had occurred to sadden the hearts once so light at Woodburn, there were yet days there when something of the old charm seemed to come back. There were hearts and minds all the more bound together by sympathy in sorrow, and by a common endurance of the petty enmity of proud and ignorant neighbours. One fine May Sunday evening, Mr. and Mrs. Degge had come in to tea at the Grange. Sir Henry Clavering was there; and after tea a walk was proposed down by the river-side to a copse, where two nightingales were continually heard, evening and night, singing against

each other in marvellous rivalry. Mr. and Mrs. Degge, Sir Henry, George, Ann, and Letty, set out for this walk. A more delicious evening never shed its charms on such a company. A light breeze blew the odours of legions of flowers towards them as they slowly wandered down the valley. They had then to cross some fields, and pass through a farm-yard, before reaching the copse in question. These fields and this copse were on Sir Roger Rockville's land; and as they approached the gate leading into the fields, they saw, to their surprise, a board erected, declaring that there was no road that way. As this was, and always had been, a road far beyond the memory of man, and as no legal measures had been taken to stop it, the gentlemen were quite confident that it could not be legally stopped. They, therefore, went on, passed through the farm-yard, saw no one, and reached the copse.

As they were standing beneath some

trees just within it, and were listening to the songs of the emulative birds, suddenly a gun was discharged over their heads, and one of the birds fell at their feet. In the greatest astonishment and indignation, the three gentlemen rushed towards the place whence the discharge came, but could discern no one. The ladies had picked up the poor little musician, now with its feathers dabbled with its blood, and all its wondrous music hushed for ever, and were in the highest state of pity and resentment.

The party took its way back in a mood of extreme exasperation at the barbarous deed, which they attributed to some one of Sir Roger's keepers, and that the poor bird had fallen a martyr to the baronet's known feelings against them. As they entered the farm-yard, two young men came towards them, one having a gun on his shoulders. This one addressed the party without any sign of courtesy.

"Did not you see the board up by the gate?"

"Yes!" it was replied. "We saw it, but it has no business there. This is an old road, and has not, to our certain knowledge, been legally stopped."

"I tell you," said the young man, in an excited tone, "there is no road—never was a road, and no one shall come this way."

"Pray, who are you, young man?" said Sir Henry Clavering.

"Who am I? I am the son of the tenant here."

"Then let me tell you," said Sir Henry, "that I am Sir Henry Clavering, a magistrate. This is Mr. Degge, another magistrate, who must have heard of any intention to stop this road by legal means. You young men are new here,—your father has only entered on this farm at Lady Day. We are old inhabitants, and know that this has always been a road."

"I don't care," said the young farmer, "who you are. I tell you there is no road here. I am ordered by Sir Roger to let nobody pass here, and I won't, and"—clapping his gun with one hand, as the other rested it on his shoulder—"if any one comes after this notice, I'll give him what shall prevent him coming again."

"Do you know," said Mr. Degge, "what you are saying and doing? With a gun in your hand, menacing death or disablement to any one coming upon a lawful road?"

"Yes, I know what I say; and if you want to know more, this is my legal adviser"—pointing to the other man, who had a town look about him.

"So," said Mr. Degge, "you are a lawyer; and do you approve of such language as this?"

"I say," replied the lawyer, "resist force by force."

"Then," said Mr. Degge, "you are a very

dangerous and unlawyerlike adviser, and this matter cannot rest here." And with that the party walked on.

On inquiry, it was found that the lawyer was the brother of the young farmer, and a mere lawyer's clerk in Castleborough. Sir Henry Clavering immediately wrote to Sir Roger Rockville, detailing what had taken place, and requesting to know whether these proceedings were really sanctioned by him. In reply, Sir Roger said that the road through the farm-yard in question was a great nuisance, and he had told the farmer that he might get it stopped if he could, but that he had not authorised him to use any menace or violence. Sir Henry requested to know whether Sir Roger denied the ancient right of road, and whether he had ordered the board to be put up? To these questions Sir Roger gave no reply. Sir Henry and Mr. Degge, therefore, issued a warrant for the farmer to appear before the bench, on a

given day, in order to have him bound over to keep the peace.

When the day arrived, it was found that never had there been so full an assembly of magistrates for years. It was evident that Sir Roger had mustered all his friends. The man was called up, and charged by Sir Henry Clavering with the menaces already mentioned. He replied, that he had only done as he was ordered by his landlord. Sir Henry looked round, but though Sir Roger's friends were there in great force, he himself was absent. As the man swore positively that Sir Roger had ordered him to turn everybody back, and, if they would not go, to use force, and had sent the warning-board for him to put up, Sir Henry produced and read Sir Roger's letter, declaring that he had not authorised the farmer to use any menace or violence. This was a poser, and the responsibility of the act was thrown wholly on the man, who was declared by Sir Henry

to be perjured. He added, that he should prosecute him for the perjury; but he now demanded that he should be bound to keep the peace towards every one for twelve months, under a very heavy penalty. But here the united power of Sir Henry and Mr. Degge failed against the whole bench, who were unanimous in declaring that it would be quite sufficient if the young man promised that he would not thus offend again. And on a ready promise on his part, he was discharged.

Mr. Degge told the magistrates that they had taken a very heavy responsibility upon themselves, as, from what he had seen of the young man's temperament, he believed him to be so excitable that, under the least provocation, he might do some serious mischief to some one, and that he should, for public security, feel himself compelled to sue for a mandamus requiring them to show cause for neglecting the very necessary precau-

tion of binding the delinquent to keep the peace.

This announcement produced an evident damp on the assembled justices; but the man was already discharged, and there was no help for it. But even before Sir Henry could issue a warrant to summon the man to answer the charge of perjury, a fresh encounter had produced a repetition of the very same conduct in him. All the people of the neighbourhood were incensed at the clandestine attempt to stop this road, and made constant use of it, though round about, in going to Rockville; and in a very short time the effect of the reiterated irritation of this popular opposition had produced actual insanity in the young farmer, whose mother, it was found, was already confined in a lunatic asylum, and whither he himself had to be conducted. This melancholy visitation of course stopped all proceedings on the part of Sir Henry and Mr. Degge, even against the magistrates. The

road was left peaceably open; but the condition of mind originated by this constant clashing of views betwixt what might be called the Woodburn and Rockville parties, was one very prejudicial to the happiness of the neighbourhood, and ominous of results of no agreeable kind.

END OF VOL. II.

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